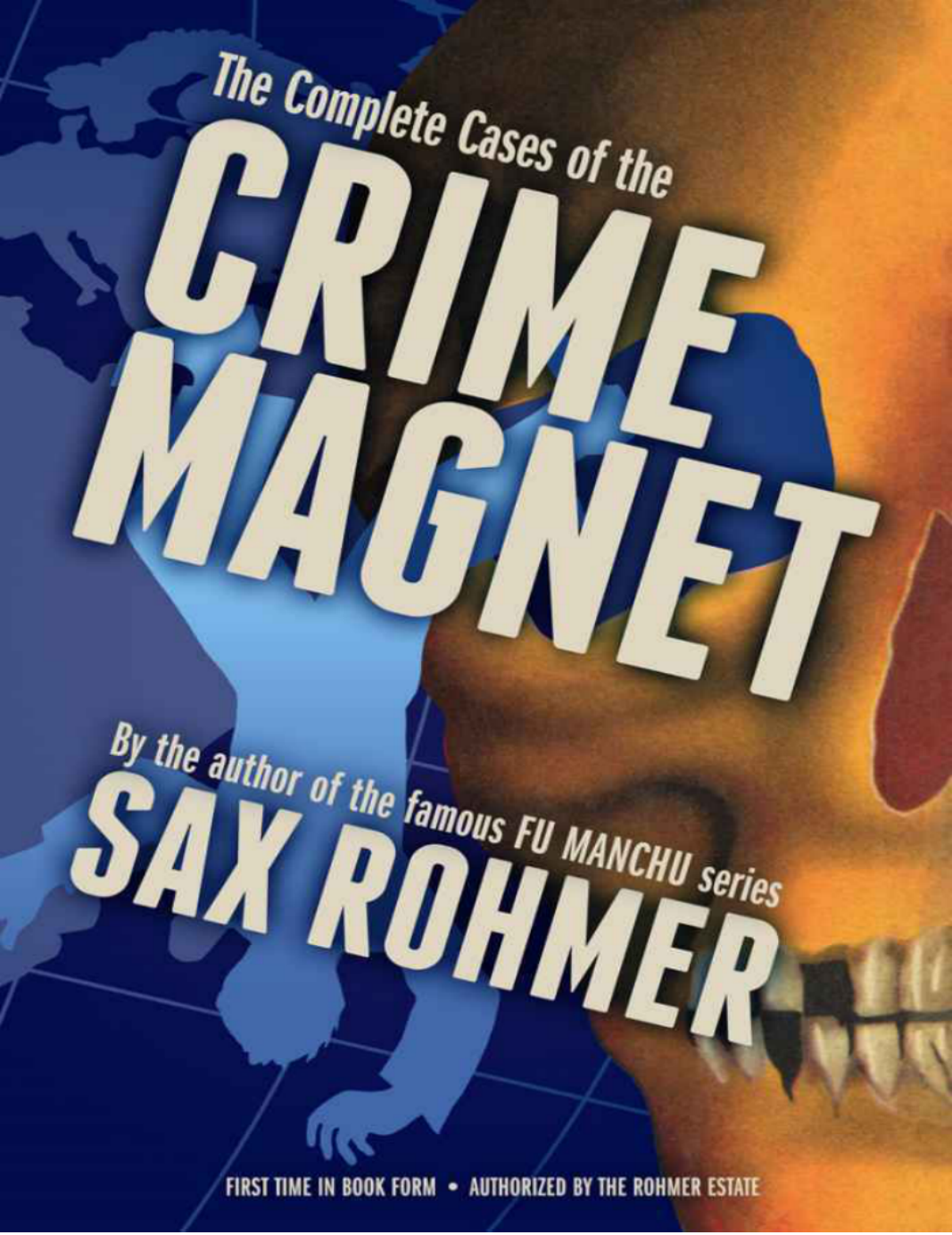
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By the author of the famous FU MANCHU series
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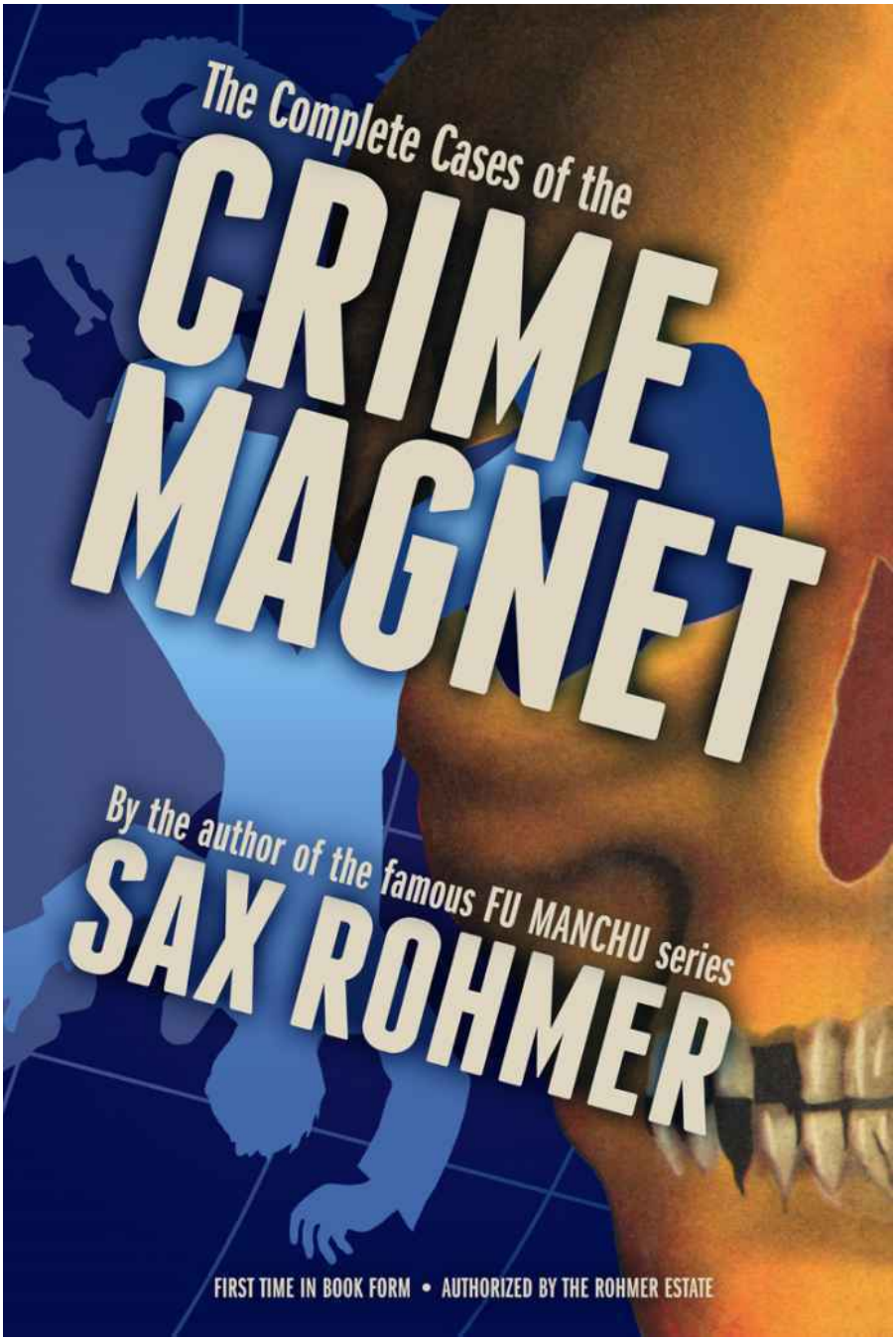
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The Complete Cases of the Crime Magnet

by

Sax Rohmer

Introduction by

Will Murray

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Introduction

Will Murray

IF Sax Rohmer (1883-1959) had given the world only the immortal Dr. Fu Manchu, his literary posterity would be assured. But from his facile and prolific pen sprang several other indelible characters, such as Gaston Max, Bruce Harley, Red Kerry of Scotland Yard and Morris Klaw, the unique Dream Detective.

The most obscure of this august company is undoubtedly Major Bernard de Treville, whose urbane exploits ran in the Sunday newspaper supplement, *This Week,* between 1937 and 1945.

A literary but not literal descendant of Sherlock Holmes, de Treville is not far removed in time from Ian Fleming's earliest James Bond exploits, so he comfortably fits into the espionage sub-genre as well. Only eight years separates the final Trevvy tale from Fleming's *Casino Royale* in 1953. That makes them contemporaries, as well as fellow countrymen, even if they possessed entirely different sensibilities, owing to the undeniable fact that a generation separated them.

Trevvy is a cosmopolitan chap, a former Guardsman, supposedly retired as a regimental officer, a world traveler who has ranged from Palestine to Tibet, a consummate bluffer, but extremely adept in the manly arts. He is a man out of his time, a throwback to an earlier era. A modern musketeer, if you will, somehow transported out of the era of Cardinal de Richelieu and dropped into the mid 20th century.

In his earliest tales, he is unwaveringly British; Sandhurst, Eaton and all that. But before long de Treville is claiming as his ancestor the Black Captain of the Musketeers, Jean-Armand du Peyrer, Comte des Troisville, called Monsieur de Treville in Alexander Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* —making him unmistakably of Gascon ancestry. Possibly that early gallant man-of-leisure pose is part of a public posture, for as the series matures, Trevvy is revealed to be more than the storied dilettante who flits from world capital to world capital, taking in the latest stage plays, hobnobbing with the Smart Set in elegant cafés and bistros—and forever alighting upon trouble like a gadabout butterfly chancing upon a deadly scorpion.

Major de Treville does not seek cash or clients, mysteries to solve or damsels to rescue, yet he is forever lucking onto all of these absorbing but untidy distractions. Trevvy is less Sherlock Holmes than he is a reimagining of the dashing hero of an earlier Sax Rohmer work, *The Exploits of Captain O'Hagan.* Like de Treville, Captain Bernard O'Hagan, V.C., D.S.O., was a man out of his time, and a descendant of one of the musketeers of Louis XIII, Denis O'Hagan. His adventures ran serially in *McClure's Magazine* in 1913-14 and were collected in book form in 1916. It was one of the author's earliest and

most obscure works, which may be why Sax Rohmer felt comfortable updating O'Hagan for *This Week*.

Although today lumped in with the pulp writers on both sides of the Atlantic who aped his superior thrillers, once he found his audience, Rohmer wrote for the highest-paying U.S. slick magazines. Fu Manchu appeared in both *Collier's* and *Liberty,* for example. So it's not surprising that he appeared frequently in the family-friendly *This Week*.

There is no question that the character of Bernard de Treville was created with this market in mind. He was tailored to the American audience, which doted on sophisticated stories centering on polished British or European protagonists, and lapped up the works of then-contemporary writers such as Edgar Wallace, and Leslie Charteris of the Saint fame.

Call them formula or potboilers, these ritual stories are easy, engaging reads. Rohmer made a virtue of the compression forced upon him by the story strictures and slick-fiction formulas of *This Week*. The manner in which Trevvy serendipitously attracts fresh encounters, sinister plots and outrageous opportunities smacks of the mystical. Thus, he earns his nom de guerre, "the Crime Magnet."

"Mystery flies to you as moths fly to a flame," his ever-present companion-narrator Digger tells him in one tale, perhaps with a mixture of admiration and irritation. For Digger is a writer, the Watson of the series, and an obvious stand-in for Sax Rohmer himself. Both are Irish.

"I am constantly finding myself involved in strange cases which don't concern me in any way," de Treville notes in a later tale.

A subtle thread of mysticism is woven into the otherwise E. Phillips Oppenheim-style proceedings. When Digger mentions that he's a firm believer in the doctrine of reincarnation, the reader wonders why Rohmer bothers to mention this superfluous fact. So it is with a distinct shock that we read in subsequent stories that Digger matter-of-factly considers de Treville to be the literal reincarnation of his illustrious ancestor.

The first eight Trevvy exploits take place in the vibrant Europe of the bygone era now known as Between the Wars. Many of these are tales of romantic suspense and political intrigue—often both. Rohmer eschews most of the exotic Eastern locales for which he is famed, but eventually Trevvy does get around to visiting some few of them.

With "The Dutch Cheese," the series shifts from Old England to the New World, and while settings become more familiar to *This Week* readers, Rohmer's handling of American speech and behaviors betrays his scant acquaintance with them, despite several memorable visits to the U.S.

Not until the semi-fantastic four-part serial, “The Panama Plot,” does the sobriquet of the Crime Magnet surface. When Trevvy asks of Digger, “Am I not the Crime Magnet?” one wonders if the editor has been holding out on the reader.

But a careful reading of de Treville’s second recorded case—if it can be so styled—reveals the following boast, “I can find a mystery by simply stepping out of my down door in Piccadilly, and accosting the first seven people to pass by.”

Clearly, the man had a talent for attracting beautiful people with ugly problems. And artfully resolving them. His particular genius went in the direction of redheaded femmes fatales; he blundered upon them by the dozen. No doubt Sax Rohmer’s immediate inspiration was his titian-haired wife, Elizabeth.

It is during its U.S. phase that the series truly shifts into the mystery-thriller genre, although not without the odd flashback to old slick-magazine themes. “The Mystery of the Paneled Room” inaugurated the middle sequence of stories. Appearing after a ten-month hiatus in the fall of 1939, it was the first run of de Treville exploits to carry the series designation of Crime Magnet, and suggests Rohmer—if not his editors—carefully rethought the core concept with its crime-suspense potentials in mind.

Then World War II intervened. De Treville vanished from the scene. But really it was his author who was missing in action. It was all very hush-hush.

After an absence of three years, Sax Rohmer returned to *This Week,* along with Major de Treville. The editors explained that the author had temporarily stopped writing short stories. Rohmer was again sojourning in the States when he wrote this last trio of de Treville mysteries in 1944 and ’45. These are among the best of the cycle. One of the final Trevvy tales, “The Stolen Peach Stone,” is a rewrite of a then-unsold short story, “The Green Scarab.” In its original form, it has since seen print several times.

Despite appearing in a publication read by some 12 million readers, the Trevvy stories have rarely been reprinted. A modest sampling appeared in the British periodical, *To-day*. Two, “The Mystery of the Paneled Room” and “The Secret in the Ruins,” were collected in hardcover mystery anthologies contemporaneous with the latter Crime Magnet stories. A smattering subsequently ran in *The Saint* magazine and *Edgar Wallace Mystery Magazine* in the ’50s and ’60s. Curiously, when the series was adapted for a 1940 BBC radio series, Trevvy was replaced by Rohmer’s more famous Parisian protagonist, Gaston Max, of *Golden Scorpion* and *Yellow Claw* fame. The broadcast series was called “Myself and Gaston Max.”

One wonders why Rohmer never attempted a Bernard de Treville

novel. How the character might have developed in the longer form would be interesting to discover. But the writer who was born Arthur Henry Sarsfield Ward evidently never considered that venture. Alas.

Suffice it to say that this series has never before been collected in one volume. Fans of Sax Rohmer, old and new, should welcome this long-overdue compendium. Most have never encountered but a smattering of the tales contained within.

Turn the page and meet the modern musketeer, the urbane and illustrious Bernard de Treville… AKA the Crime Magnet!

The Black and White Bag

Major de Treville, witty, gallant, lovable, seeks adventure—and finds it everywhere. A popular writer creates his most fascinating character.

"IS anyone there?" I called out loudly.

No reply came from the shadows outside. The moon was full but from time to time heavy clouds obscured it. I could see one end of the pergola and a dark outhouse, but although I listened intently could detect no sound. Yet, and not for the first time, I could have sworn that I had heard footsteps of someone prowling about the rear of the cottage.

The daily help had left about dusk and I was becoming uncomfortably conscious of a feeling that whenever I went and stared out at the back of the little building, someone crept around to the front. But when I opened the front door and stepped out on the rustic porch, someone crept around to the back!

I had selected the spot for its loneliness; and in this respect had certainly been successful. I had a long and exacting piece of work on hand and had thought that the quiet of the country in early Spring would aid concentration. But tonight I was peculiarly restless. A fitful breeze sought out cracks and crannies, producing creaks and dim wailing sounds. Also, I was disappointed, for I had expected de Treville to join me.

He had not turned up. And now, although dimly in the distance I had heard the arrival and departure of the last train from London at the local station some four miles away, there was no sign of my friend.

That Major Bernard de Treville is eccentric one could not hope to deny, but breaking engagements was never one of his peculiarities, and accordingly, some time before, I had called up his flat, but had been unable to get any reply. I had rather expected he would come by road, with Perigal, his wooden-faced chauffeur-valet. There was ample accommodation for his Bentley in a barn which belonged to the cottage. However, now I had given him up altogether.

I went into the little front sitting room, lighted my pipe and settled down to endeavour to work again. I took it for granted that Trevvy would phone some time during the night. No sooner, it seemed to me, had I taken up my pencil than that sound of footsteps again reached my ears!

Very quietly I stood up. I could think of no reason why a burglar should interest himself in a furnished cottage inhabited by a hardworking writer. But some explanation there must be of this curious interference. I took a niblick from my golf bag and crept into the kitchen. On the threshold I pulled up sharply. The window was raised to its fullest extent. Clouds having temporarily dispersed, against the light of the moon I saw a man climbing in!

"Who the devil are *you?* " I demanded.

"Ssh!" A dim silhouette raised its hand. "No lights, Digger!"

I saw that he was drawing the curtains which I had left open.

It was de Treville!

"You see," he said, depositing a black and white suitcase on the corner of my writing-table, "I have tried to throw them off the trail."

"Throw them off the trail?" I echoed in bewilderment. "What on earth do you mean?"

I stared at him. He wore a light Burberry over a tweed suit, and the brim of his soft brown hat was pulled down in a manner which oddly reminded me of a musketeer. Sometimes Trevvy seems quite unreal. He is like something out of a Dumas romance, something which cannot possibly be true to-day. He has wavy gray hair, thick black eyebrows, and the mustache which proclaims the British soldier. He is tall and carries himself with an air. And to see him play with a monocle pendant upon a black silk ribbon is to regret the days of the Regency. He dresses so well that certain unfortunate strangers have mistaken him for a fop. If they had known how he earned his V.C., or even his D.S.O., they might have avoided a lot of unpleasantness. My friendship with de Treville is based upon his unexpectedness. Although he is an Irishman, he traces his pedigree back to that Treville who was Captain of the King's Musketeers in the days of Louis XIII. I may add that he lives up to his ancestry.

"As I see it," he replied, looking about him, "this place was obviously not meant to sustain a siege."

"Certainly it wasn't! Why should it be?"

"Because I rather anticipate something of the kind at any moment."

"What!"

"I have a gun in my pocket—I suspect that you are going to tell me that you are unarmed…."

"Of course I'm unarmed!"

"Pity!" de Treville murmured. "And a great mistake. We delude ourselves with the idea that we live in a highly civilized age. As a matter of fact, there was never an age in which arms were more necessary. We must do the best we can. There are only two doors, I take it?"

"Yes; both of which are locked at the moment."

"No shutters?" He glanced at the windows. The wind rising at this moment howled mournfully round the cottage.

"Suppose, Trevvy," I said, "you satisfy my natural curiosity. For the second time, what the devil is this all about?"

"I'll tell you in a moment," de Treville said. "Is there any coal in the kitchen?"

"Coal! Certainly! A big scuttle."

“Good enough! If you will slip upstairs, turn on the lights in your own room and in that which I am to occupy, draw the curtains, and then turn the lights off again—I have a little job to do in the kitchen.”

I surrendered myself to the atmosphere in which Trevvy lives and moves. I shook off the last shreds of reality and pretended to myself, as I nearly always did in Trevvy’s company, that I was an actor in a fantastic drama. As I went up the narrow stair, turned up the light, I reflected that no man who enjoyed the friendship of de Treville could long be dull. I had just finished carrying out his instructions, when I heard him coming upstairs, obviously carrying the black and white suitcase.

“Are we to remain in the dark?”

“No; light up in the room which overlooks the front gate.”

I did so. Trevvy dumped the suitcase on the floor and stared at me with dancing eyes. From one capacious pocket of his Burberry he produced a bottle of Scotch whisky which I had left upon the buffet, from the other, a nearly full syphon of soda water.

“I couldn’t bring any glasses,” he explained, “but I see there are some over the washbowl, and I’m dying for a drink.”

I paused for a moment watching him as he poured out two drinks, and then: “Is there any particular reason,” I asked, “why we should abandon a small but perfectly comfortable sitting room and settle down to spend the evening in this bedroom?”

“There is,” he assured me, took a drink and sighed. “I needed that! It’s a simple story.” He lighted a cigarette. “How often have I assured you that there is an adventure on every railroad train?”

“Many times. But sitting in this bedroom is not my idea of adventure!”

“The adventure,” said Trevvy, “will develop at any moment. Our preparations being complete, I can now explain what has occurred. I was detained, and although Perigal was waiting, I suddenly determined to come down by train. I hoped to find some sort of taxi at the local station. Although I dress with some care, my traveling kit is badly dilapidated, and Perigal, who is as you know the perfect servant, recently acquired a new suitcase. He had packed it for my visit to you, and I confess that its striking design rather startled me at first! There had been no time to have initials stamped upon it. He saw me off at Waterloo and I had the black and white bag taken into the Pullman—discreetly draped with a traveling rug! I pushed it out of sight behind my armchair….” He paused and stood listening.

“Did you think you heard something?” I asked. Trevvy nodded.

“We haven’t long,” he said; “let me explain. As I had boarded the Pullman, the attendant had almost embraced me! He was none other than Sergeant Evans, who had been with me in India. I was still

thinking of old times when I took my seat.

"The first circumstance which told me that I was on the edge of possibilities was this: A suitcase similar in every way to mine reposed beside a chair immediately across the coach from where I sat! It bore no initials, and was obviously of identical make. I became interested in its owner.

"He was a stout man, clean-shaven, pale and of positively villainous appearance. His companion was a red-haired girl, very smartly dressed, attractive, but with those greenish-gray eyes which are nearly always dangerous. She paid me the compliment of smiling when the pallid man was not looking, but he detected her, turned, and looked at me in a way which I can only describe as septic.

"Observing that he was exchanging glances with a man seated further along the car, I considered this man. He, also, looked uncommonly like a retired pugilist. They were conferring and glancing in my direction covertly. Here, I told myself, was a dangerous group, of whom the red-haired girl was one!"

He paused again; we both listened. But the wind rose once more and the sound which I thought I had heard, the opening of the front gate, was drowned in its howling.

"I was indebted to the pugilist for the furtive way in which, every once in a while, he would glance at the black and white bag beside the fat fellow. If I had had Perigal on the train, the matter would have been simple, but being alone, it was difficult. Absolutely no plan had occurred to me up to the time that we were slowing into your local station—"

"No plan to do what?" I asked blankly.

"To obtain possession of the other bag!"

"Good heavens!"

"Suddenly I remembered Sergeant Evans! I walked out of the car to look for him…."

"There's someone trying the door!" I said.

"Yes! but I must bring you up to date. When we detrained, the prizefighter was carrying the black and white bag. His party had preceded him. I was close behind with my own bag. Sergeant Evans was waiting at the barrier; and as the fighting man came up, Evans said: 'You haven't given me your Pullman tickets, sir.'

"'You have all the tickets,' said the big man, setting down the bag. 'I gave them all to you.' However, he searched his pockets, and while he was fumbling, I switched the bags! Draping my capture with the travelling rug, which I had ready, I pushed the bag into Evans' hands.

"'I want a taxi!' I snapped. 'I'm late for an engagement. Never mind your beastly half-crown—get me a taxi.'

"'Very good, sir,' said Evans. 'Sorry—this way, sir,' playing up

beautifully.

"In less than half a minute I was inside a local taxi with the mysterious suitcase and had started on my way here!"

The bell rang. I heard a murmur of voices.

"When the substitution was discovered I don't know. But as my taxi wheezed off I saw the suspected party getting into a powerful French car which awaited them. They had my bag!"

"But—"

"No serious loss," Trevvy assured me, lightly; "but they will be able to trace me." The ringing and banging on the door now demanded attention.

"They must have made the discovery on the road," he added. "I discharged my taxi at the end of the lane, and took the path over the stile and through the orchard. I am almost sure somebody was behind me. I hid in the shrubbery for a while, certain this cottage was being watched; then came in via the kitchen!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Open the window and parley with the enemy!"

"This is madness, Trevvy! You think instinctively that there's something criminal in the suitcase. It may be a pure misunderstanding."

"My instincts are rarely wrong," de Treville replied; "parley with the enemy."

I drew back the curtains, opened the window and looked out. Two men stepped from the porch below and raised their faces. One was an alien of undeterminable nationality; the other I recognized immediately as the retired pugilist referred to by de Treville. Their expressions were not amiable.

"Yes?" I called. "What do you want?"

"Listen!" said the man with the battle-scarred face, "come down and open the door!"

"But I was going to bed!"

"Never mind what you was *goin'* to do! Come down and open the door!"

"Ask them on what grounds they make such a demand," Trevvy whispered.

"I don't know you—why should I open the door? What do you want?"

"You know what we want, and you know we're goin' to get it! I can't say if you're in on this or not. If you're not, you're sheltering a party I want to meet. If you are, you're in for it!"

The light was switched off behind me and a pistol thrust into my hand. "Let it go!" Trevvy whispered. "Say if they don't clear off you are going to call he police!"

“Listen to *me,* now!” I cried and craned from the window. “I don’t like the look of you!” The barrel of the automatic gleamed in the moonlight. “Get out—or I’ll phone the police!”

“You think we are fools!” rasped the other man, speaking with a guttural accent. And suddenly the pair darted under cover of the porch. From this shelter: “You have made one big mistake,” the guttural voice continued. “You have taken it to a lonely place, and we have followed you. This house is surrounded!”

From behind me: “Where’s the telephone?” Trevvy whispered.

“On the writing table, downstairs.”

“Keep up the bluff that you don’t know what it’s all about. I’ll get to the phone. This is serious.”

Dimly, I became aware that he was gone, and was groping his way quietly downstairs. Keeping well back from the window: “You must be mad,” I shouted, “to think that I have anything in my possession worth the risk you are taking. You will all spend the night in jail!”

I became aware of pattering footsteps, a mutter of voices, and then of more footsteps. Someone had crept into the porch from the other side, halted with those hiding there, and then retired again. I wondered what this might portend.

“Listen!” came the foreign voice. “Cease to be silly. Come down and open the door, and you will save your skin—both of you. Otherwise, you are two against all of us, and you will lose the fight.”

I could think of nothing to say to that; whilst I waited and wondered, a sound of muffled footsteps reached my ears. I twisted about, pistol in hand, and discerned de Treville.

“Situation pretty desperate!” he whispered. “The line’s dead—they must have cut the cable!”

It was all so characteristic of Trevvy that I experienced an almost uncontrollable desire to laugh. Deliberately, for no good reason whatever, he had sought out a group of obviously dangerous criminals, and by impudent interference with their plans had brought them down upon us in force.

“What on earth are we going to do?”

“They won’t waste time on the door,” said Trevvy, “but they may try to rush one of the windows. Give me the gun. I’ll take up a strategic post downstairs.” He looked about him.

“What’s my job?” I asked.

“Ah!” he exclaimed. “Coal! A useful commodity, coal! I observe a supply near the fireplace. Go from room to room and wherever you see a head below—hit it!” I heard him creeping downstairs.

“For the last time,” the guttural voice challenged, “are you going to open the door?”

“No!”

I had four large lumps of coal ready. Believing as they did that I was armed, the desperation of the fellows below was manifest. One rushed from the shadow of the porch carrying what looked like a log, and hurled this object through the sitting room window!

Carefully as I aimed, the first lump of coal merely hit him on the shoulder. He ducked and ran to cover, but not before I had got him on the ear with the second!

A crack of a shot, and a bullet fired from shelter of the porch whistled over my head and dislodged the plaster of the low ceiling! The enemy meant business.

I changed my position and crouching on the window seat looked down. A second adventurer was creeping along the border towards the smashed window, and at this moment I heard another crash in the rear of the cottage. The kitchen window had gone!

I abandoned coal. The zest of the fight was getting into my blood. A pot of ferns, a heavy object, rested upon the window ledge beside me. I raised it, leaned out at peril of my life, and dropped it upon the head of the man who was fumbling to open the smashed window.

There was a crack from the porch. A shot whistled within an inch of my head. I ducked back, hot with the excitement of triumph. The heavy pot had dropped accurately upon the skull of the man below. I had seen him slump face downward into the flower border!

And now came the detonation of a shot fired somewhere within the house. I heard a cry, the sound of a fall, and, dimly, footsteps. “Trevvy!” I called and ran to the door. “Trevvy!”

“It’s all right, Digger! Man coming through the kitchen window, but I’ve winged him!”

Groaning sounds reached me from the border; I could hear Trevvy’s footsteps. There was movement outside, muttering of voices, and then, dimly at first, the sound of a car being driven along the narrow lane.

“The gods are always dramatic!” said Trevvy’s voice from the foot of the stairs. “Here is Perigal!”

“Passed big French car at end of Lane,” Perigal reported. “Foreign driver. Passengers invisible.” Trevvy insists upon brevity of speech from servants.

“You see,” he explained to me, “I ordered Perigal to get his supper and then come on down here.”

“Assuming,” I replied, “that there is no one dead in or about the property, we have two shattered windows, a broken flower vase, a cut phone line and a large hole in the ceiling. This experience will cost something.”

We were assembled in the sitting room. Trevvy’s Bentley was locked in the barn. Perigal had reinforced our armory by the addition of a service revolver. The enemy had withdrawn.

"I think we may take it," said Trevvy, "that there is more to come."

He lighted a cigarette, and seemed to be listening. I was just about to help myself to a drink when, during a lull in the wind, which was rising, I heard it distinctly—a sound which had already attracted de Treville. Light footsteps were racing along the lane!

"Here it comes," said Trevvy quietly, "the second attack! They don't know the strength of our reinforcements, but they do know we can get no more. Perigal! Kitchen window! Lights out! I'll watch this one. Upstairs, Digger! Parley from window!"

I groped upstairs, and found my way to the open window. Just as I peered out, I saw a girl, whose remarkable red hair, curling under her hat, gleamed like copper in the moonlight, throw open the gate and come running along the path to the porch! She was breathing rapidly, in fact seemed to be in a state of suppressed hysteria. She disappeared under the porch and I heard her ringing and banging.

"Open the door!" she cried. "For heaven's sake, let me in! Quick! Quick! They are after me!"

I leaned cautiously from the open window. "Who's there?" I called.

She reappeared and looked up. I recognized her from Trevvy's description as the woman who had been on the train with him. She had beauty of a hard kind, and a slender, feline figure.

"Let me in!" she cried. "Please let me in," and extended her hands to me in supplication. "There is not a moment to spare!"

"What are you afraid of?"

"Of the gang—the blackmailers! *For heaven's sake, let me in!"*

I moved to the top of the stairs. "What do I do, Trevvy?" I inquired.

"Come down and open the door—stand by for a rush!"

I descended and opened the door. The girl stumbled in and I closed and bolted the door behind her. Trevvy switched up the light. She turned, and stared at him.

"You—you!" she said. "How blind you were on the train tonight! Couldn't you understand what I was trying to tell you? That those men were guarding me, that I was in their power, their prisoner!"

She stopped, breathing heavily; Trevvy regarded her, unmoved. Yet a faint change of expression was perceptible upon his features. Her full red lips were curling back, there was a glitter of small white teeth.

"For a man of your experience," she added, "you were very stupid. But what you did may save me yet."

There was an ominous silence during which we all listened intently; but no sound came from outside.

"You mention something I did," said de Treville, raising his monocle and surveying her critically. "To what do you refer?"

"To the suitcase that you substituted for mine! Yes! That case is mine! It contains evidence which would ruin me—ruin my husband's

happiness—the happiness of many!"

"By which," said de Treville, "I take it you married a wealthy man?"

"He is very wealthy."

"It would be indiscreet to ask his name. Do I understand that these men were on their way to visit your husband, the object to expose you?"

"Yes. I had kept an appointment with them in London. I offered them all I had for the return of my property. They were not satisfied. They thought I was lying to them; they were taking me to my home, to extort more from my husband."

"There must be a considerable bulk of correspondence," said Trevvy, "judging from the weight of the bag."

The beautiful but wicked eyes narrowed. "The evidence," she replied, "is not in the form of correspondence, but of gifts, with inscriptions engraved upon them. Now do you understand?"

"Yes," Trevvy murmured, twirling his monocle. "How did you manage to slip away?"

"While the car slowed down at a crossroad, I jumped out. They didn't know, but they are sure to have discovered it now. Oh, be quick! Give me my bag and somehow—somehow—smuggle me out to the Portsmouth road. Someone will give me a lift."

"To Portsmouth?"

"No, no! back to London!"

THE path over the stile, through the orchard, and across a big meadow to the Portsmouth road was not easy to follow during the intervals of darkness when the moon was obscured. But Trevvy insisted that a torch should not be used, and, he carrying the black and white suitcase and I taking care of the woman, we set out furtively. There was no sign that the enemy was anywhere near. Perigal had been left on guard at the cottage.

We hurried as well as we could. It was a curious journey which I am unlikely to forget. The woman seemed to be in a state of almost hysterical excitement, as I realized whenever I had occasion to grasp her, either at the several stiles to be negotiated or when avoiding low branches across the path. When at last we came out onto the main road, she dropped down on a grassy bank, her face white.

I said: "Are you sure that you are fit for the journey to London?"

She started up, wide-eyed. "I *must* go—I *must* go!" she cried.

Trevvy, setting the bag down on the roadside, was watching distant lights approaching us. At this late hour there was little traffic. "Here's a big car London bound," he murmured. "Step out, Digger. We must stop it."

We both stood, arms extended, in the path of the car. For one

palpitating moment I thought that the river meant to run us down. But Trevvy remained immovable in the middle of the road and I, too, stuck to my post.

There came a tremendous grinding of brakes. The car skidded almost into the ditch, but was pulled up by the chauffeur. A second man in uniform, who sat beside the driver, sprang down, but almost at the same moment the solitary passenger also leaped out.

He was tall, middle-aged, his well-cut clothes having something foreign about them; his up-curling mustache also looked un-English. He was plainly in a rage, but never once lost his dignity.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, looking from face to face sternly. He spoke perfect English.

"Pray, allow me to deal with it, sir," said the man in uniform.

"I prefer to deal with it myself. Gentlemen, explain this intrusion."

De Treville stepped forward and bowed. "It was a case of necessity, sir, which I deeply regret—for obviously you are in a hurry."

"Hurry? I have a good reason for hurry!"

"Allow me to take the liberty of presenting myself, sir. I am Major Bernard de Treville, normally at your service, but tonight servant of a woman in distress."

He turned and beckoned to our companion, who came forward and raised beseeching eyes to the mustached face of the man we had pulled up. And as she looked at him I saw the strangest expression come into those green eyes. She had been white before—she became deathly pallid now. The man stared, and I detected a faint smile of approval.

"It is a case of attempted kidnaping, sir," de Treville continued, "fortunately averted by my friend and myself. She begs that you will escort her to London."

"My good sir, I assure you it is impossible!"

The man in uniform tapped de Treville on the shoulder. He turned, raised his monocle and looked the man up and down in a way which very rarely failed, and which did not fail on this occasion. Then, to the passenger:

"Amongst gentlemen, nothing is impossible," he said, "where the honor and safety of a woman are concerned."

Yet still the man hesitated, clenching his teeth so that his jaw muscles protruded, and glancing from face to face. Then suddenly: "Very well," he snapped, "I'll see her to London. Charteris," to the man in uniform, "take charge of her bag."

He nodded stiffly and got back into the car, indicating that the red-haired woman should follow him.

BACK once more in the damaged cottage, Perigal reported briefly that nothing had occurred.

“What on earth do you make of it all, Trevvy?” I asked.

De Treville lighted a cigarette with care. “Clever woman,” he murmured.

“Do you think her story was true?”

“True!” He tossed the match into an ashtray and stared at me in apparently sincere amazement. “Of course it wasn’t true! She’s one of the gang! But it was worth losing my suitcase to defeat their plot! Perigal!”

Perigal appeared in the doorway.

“Sir?”

Mystified, I followed him. “If you are certain the woman was lying, why on earth surrender the bag?”

Without replying, he pointed to a singular collection of objects on the kitchen table.

The central exhibit was a complicated-looking affair fitted inside an old petrol tin. It had a small clock attached to it, a mass of wires, and other mysterious mechanism. There was also a flat wooden box, which contained thin plates of metal to which very sharp small, steel spikes were riveted. In the center of each plate I saw a round hole. There was a heavy hammer; there were several long nails. Finally, there was a letter.

“The letter,” said Trevvy, “is particularly illuminating. It contains final details and a rough sketch of the exact point at which these plates were to be attached to the road (to puncture the tires, of course) and this time-bomb placed in position.

“I took these from the suitcase. It opened with the same key as my own! And,” he added, thoughtfully, “I then filled the case with coal and relocked it. According to this letter. King Errol of Karmania was driving incognito tonight from Portsmouth to London. He would never have arrived if I had not caught the ten-fifty from Waterloo Station. You realize now, Digger, how important it is that we make ourselves scarce!”

“Great heavens! I realize something else! The man we stopped on the road! It was King Errol!”

“I recognized him at once! But the woman’s fangs are drawn and we shall call Scotland Yard from the first available box. One so rarely has an opportunity to bully a reigning monarch!”

The Broken Ikon

From Bernard de Treville you could always expect the unexpected! A behind-the-headlines story of Russian intrigue—1937 model.

"WHAT do you want to do?" said Trevvy.

At the moment there didn't seem to be much choice. We were jammed in the foyer of the theater but being slowly pushed out by the throng behind us in the direction of the street. High-powered lamps and cameras awaited us and a number of police were engaged in holding the crowds back. Cars were driving up, lights flashing, social bigwigs being photographed, cars driving off. The bombilation of London formed a background to this characteristic first night.

The play had been less than fair. We were bidden to a reception behind stage—and the prospect did not please.

Pressure from the rear was pushing us nearer and nearer to the exit doors. Eager glances of camera men became focussed upon the face of my companion. It was their business to get pictures of celebrities on this night, and here, if ever had been, was a celebrity.

Trevvy, in any assembly, automatically becomes the centre of attraction. Of course a man with a name like Major Bernard de Treville, V.C., D.S.O., should quite properly be a considerable individual. But Trevvy is more than that. He is the most distinguished-looking person I have ever seen.

"I don't want to go backstage, Trevvy. Frankly, the play bored me; and it's always so difficult to meet the cast under these circumstances."

"I agree. Hello! We're being photographed!"

Lights flashed, cameras clicked. A great murmur of voices went up: "Who is it?"

"Pathetic they shouldn't know!" de Treville murmured, grasping my arm. "Do you realize that we poor blokes who really try to do things that matter mean nothing in the eyes of the multitude? Of course, you know whom they are waiting for?"

"No."

"Monty Delrose—the film actor!"

Yes, it was an odd reflection. My friend had made it possible for Great Britain to continue to control the Khyber Pass, for which he had received his D.S.O. But the crowd was waiting to acclaim Monty Delrose!

"You're bored," said Trevvy. "It is intolerable, for I brought you here tonight. You shall not be bored. London seethes with exciting things, things worthy of our mettle. Follow, my friend—I will show you."

"Where are we going?"

"To the Café Turc, Soho."

“Never heard of it.”

“You are going to be surprised.”

Notorieties and regular first-nighters were being disgorged behind us. Many autograph books were thrust into the hands of my distinguished friend. The manner in which he declined to sign them would have graced a king; Trevvy’s smile was worth twenty autographs.

Once clear of the first night atmosphere and plunged into the purlieus of Soho I felt again that Trevvy was in his right surroundings. Here were mysterious resorts frequented by cosmopolitans of more than dubious appearance; little restaurants from which music proceeded and which were enjoying that temporary prosperity which the Smart Set can give; taxicabs pushing their way through the narrow streets.

Such was my mood that these seemed an intrusion. Lacking the mechanical element, with very little stretch of imagination, I might have supposed myself to be in the narrow streets of Old Paris in the days of my friend’s truculent ancestor. As Trevvy hurried me along: “What is this Café Turc?” I asked.

“The London headquarters of the Anarchists!” he replied. “Here extreme revolutionaries meet to discuss their schemes for upsetting governments. You know”—he grasped my arm; he walks at such a prodigious speed—“criminal investigators really have a very thin time. They have to wait for their cases. I can find a mystery by simply stepping out of my own door in Piccadilly, and accosting one of the first seven people to pass by. Mystery is always on our doorstep. We shall find it in the Café Turc tonight.”

He pulled up abruptly before a tawdry-looking little establishment distinguished by a dimly illuminated sign, which may have been intended to represent the Crescent of Islam.

“Dressed as we are,” he said, “we shall attract a certain amount of attention.”

He pushed the door open and I found myself in a stuffy lobby; a combined smell of cheap tobacco, grease and unwashed humanity assailed my nostrils. A second door was opened and we found ourselves in one of those restaurants which owe their existence to the presence of that enormous alien population which in one way and another serves the natives of the great modern Babylon called London.

At many little tables which I saw around me were groups of earnest men and women, poorly dressed and wholly unattractive. The Bohemian element was lacking; this was not an artists’ café. The atmosphere was stuffy to a degree; I could not imagine what had prompted de Treville to bring me here.

Trevvy’s statement that our appearance would create some

comment was amply confirmed; it created a sort of consternation. As he stood there swinging his monocle on the silk ribbon, I wondered more and more what mad impulse had prompted him to select the Café Turc as an after-theater resort.

We were not being ridiculed; on the contrary, our entrance had produced a sort of ominous silence. We took our seats at a table at the further end, the check cloth of which was covered with coffee stains. As we sat down and I looked about me I asked: "What's the idea, Trevvy?"

"The idea is," he replied, "that you said you were bored. You are interested in crime; here surrounding you are some of the most dangerous international criminals living today."

A waiter wearing a suit which either had been inherited from his grandfather or picked up in Petticoat Lane, approached us furtively.

"Strange to relate," Trevvy murmured aside to me, "the coffee here is excellent." To the waiter he said: "Coffee!"

The waiter stared almost incredulously and went away. Conversation about us was renewed, but it was in a much lower key than that which had prevailed as we had entered. We were a disturbing element. In my friendship with Major Bernard de Treville I had become used to this. He had a genius for creating disturbances.

"Always," Trevvy whispered to me aside, "it is but one step in London from the commonplace to the bizarre. I selected this table for a reason. Glance to your left."

I glanced. At the next table a curious group was assembled: two men and a woman. Of the men, one was a big and truly forbidding ruffian, low-browed, sallow, with close curling thick black hair; his companion was equally sallow, a younger man of similar type, although physically less formidable. But the woman belonged to a different category.

I suppose in my embarrassment on entering the place, for I lacked Trevvy's divine disdain of his environment, I had overlooked her; also, she had been seated with her back to me. But as I looked at her now, I realized that I was looking at a delicate and exquisite creature.

In contrast to the other patrons of the café and particularly in contrast to her companions, she seemed wildly out of place; for although poorly dressed, she was dressed with style, and in good taste. The poise of her dark head, the movements of her hands, alike betrayed culture. The conversation, from the few words which I had overheard as we took our seats, had been in English; now, in lowered voices, it became Russian. The big man, as Trevvy had crossed the floor to the selected table, had had his open palm extended towards the woman. This I had noticed; for I had had a glimpse of an object which lay there, and which seemed to resemble a fragment of broken

jewelry.

Now we were the focus of many suspicious glances. The man had rapidly concealed the object which he held in his hand. Conversation was resumed when the shabby waiter brought our coffee, but it remained low-pitched.

"You see," said Trevvy, "it is my fate to be involved in criminal intrigues. What would be regarded as startling, indeed fantastic, coincidence in a novel or play, to me is merely commonplace."

He sipped his coffee and I followed suit. It was certainly very good Arabic coffee. Twice I caught what I construed as appealing glances cast in our direction by the dark eyes of our beautiful neighbor. But except that the big man was bullying her to a state bordering on hysteria, I could make out nothing else. Russian is a language utterly beyond my comprehension, but Trevvy knows it well. And suddenly, during a lull in the argument, swinging his monocle on its ribbon and then raising it, holding it slightly away from his eye, and staring languidly at the big man:

"You are a frightful liar," he said, in English. "Why do you lie?" he exploded.

I was prepared for the worst. If Trevvy's idea of relieving my boredom was to involve me in a free fight, here was every prospect of one!

The face of the formidable ruffian at the next table slowly assumed an expression coldly, deliberately murderous, as he fixed small sunken eyes upon my friend. His thick-fingered, muscular hands clutching the table edge, he stood upright. Trevvy raised his monocle inch by inch as if to follow this movement, continuing to keep his cold gaze focussed upon the man's face. The dark girl clasped her hands, bit her lip and half turned as if to stand up. The younger man smiled in a most disturbing manner.

"You … I will not describe you, but *you* —called *me* —a liar!"

"Yes," de Treville dropped his monocle and leaned back in his chair. "You are lying to Madame the Duchess. Why do you lie to her?"

Those remarkable words produced three swift changes of expression. The big man's jaw dropped as though someone had hit him; the other man ceased to smile; and the dark eyes of the woman opened widely so that I realized how wonderful they were.

"You know me?" she whispered. She spoke with no trace of accent. "Thank heaven. I am not alone!"

"Duchess?" the big man laughed and to my great relief sat down again, still staring at de Treville. "There are no duchesses today! She is no more a duchess than I am a duke!"

"That you are a duke," drawled de Treville, sipping his coffee, "is a crime of which I would never accuse you. I have merely charged you

with being a liar, and I am prepared to prove my words."

Although this conversation which had been conducted in low voices could not have been audible to anyone else, the movements of the actors had attracted unpleasant attention from other tables. Five or six patrons of the café had ceased speaking and were watching us closely. (I was no longer bored.)

De Treville extended his large but shapely hand, palm upward. "Give me the broken Ikon," he said sternly. "Following an inquiry, it may or it may *not* be restored to you."

"Great heaven!" the woman muttered and closed her eyes. "You are from Head Center!"

Trevvy, never removing his gaze from the big man's face, replied: "Until this matter is settled you must regard me as *being* Head Center." The open hand remained outstretched.

With an audible snapping of his teeth, the big man plunged his hand into a pocket and produced that object of which I had had a glimpse. It was part of a jewelled crucifix. For a moment he hesitated, then tossed it over onto our table.

De Treville picked it up reverently and handed it to me. "Take it, Commissar," he said, sternly. "This comrade must be taught respect for the Cause."

I took the jewelled fragment, placed it in my wallet and returned the wallet to my pocket. I had become more than ever acutely uncomfortable to find myself raised to the rank of Commissar. I was not quite clear what that rank conveyed, yet that I had suddenly become a focus of attention was unmistakable. That a Commissar must speak Russian was undeniable, and I foresaw almost immediate exposure.

"For the convenience of the Duchess," said Trevvy, bowing in the woman's direction, "the examination will be conducted in English, with which language we are all acquainted."

As always happens to me I began to ask myself: how much did Trevvy know? What had he known of this matter, if anything, before he entered the Café Turc? Was he, as I had known him to do so many times, picking up his cues from point to point, and by means of that almost psychic perception which was his, framing his actions in accordance with what he learned? There was a rather awkward lull; then:

"Suppose," said the big man who was breathing very heavily, "I dispute your authority?"

Trevvy finished his coffee. He clapped his hands and called out something in Russian, which resulted in the almost magical appearance of the shabby waiter.

"I want you to put a call through to Moscow," he said in English.

“When you have got Moscow, I will give you the number.”

“Stop!” The waiter stopped obediently at the big man’s order.

“You dare to dispute my authority?” Trevvy challenged. “This is a further offence!”

“Leave it,” was the growling reply. “What do you want to do?”

The woman burst into a torrent of passionate words. “Please, please, hear me!” she pleaded. “Paul is innocent—I give you my word of honor as an Englishwoman. And although he hates, and has never disguised that he hates, the present rulers of his unhappy country, he has never taken any part in the intrigues against them. Least of all would he have soiled his hands,” she stared fiercely at the big man, “by plotting against such as you who plan to assassinate those leaders!”

She turned to me; her eyes blazed. “Commissar,” she said, “you are a traitor to your government! You are one of those who destroy—destroy!—who try to overthrow what little of direction is left! And you, too,” the beautiful eyes were turned to Trevvy, “you are a gentleman—you might almost be an Englishman. Yet you are one of these…”—she clenched her hands, sought for a word—“jackals, who lurk and wait—haven’t the courage to attack in broad daylight!”

Trevvy remained unmoved. This outburst had silenced the café.

“To expect justice from one of you would be to expect too much. But I demand to know what you have done with my husband. I demand his release. If my appeal to you fails, although I am no longer a British subject, there are other means!”

She was really splendid in her brave defiance. My heart was beating rapidly. I wondered who the man might be who had won so glorious a mate, and I wondered why her face seemed vaguely familiar.

“Head Center,” said Trevvy solemnly, *“is* justice, whether you believe in his aims or not. Come—we are wasting time!” He stood up. “You!” he turned contemptuously to the big man, “will come with me and the Commissar. Madame the Duchess will accompany us. The others will follow.”

He turned, and including in his gesture all those silent groups who were watching us spellbound, indicated that they should follow. He walked toward the door.

“No!” The woman was staring alternately at myself and de Treville.

“What!” de Treville turned and smiled at her. “My dear… Duchess! I had almost called you by your family name! Don’t you trust me?”

She stared into his eyes and slowly her expression changed. “I’ll come,” she whispered.

An elderly and dilapidated house in Bloomsbury proved to be our objective. A second taxi packed with nondescript but dangerous-

looking personalities was following ours.

Nothing quite like our entrance to that house recurs to me. The big man rang the bell and performed a series of curious raps on the door, which ultimately was opened. In a dingy, evil-smelling lobby I beheld an appalling dwarf—but a dwarf of such powerful build that he resembled a gorilla. He had long hair and a matted black beard, which was graying. He wore a sort of smock and a leather belt, and in the belt was stuck a revolver.

"I am glad you are here," a guttural voice whispered in my ear. "It is time that Moscow acted, Smolenski exceeds his powers. We have the English police upon us!"

I turned and found at my shoulder a red-bearded face out of which glared two fanatical China-blue eyes. Vaguely I remembered having seen the man in the Café Turc. I tried quickly to think how Trevvy would have reacted to this. He was ahead of me. But at last: "The chief suggests," I said, grateful that the conversation was in English, "that Smolenski is not true to the Cause."

"I, too, think this! He is right!" Hands covered with red hair, hands which gripped my arms like steel claws, clutched me. "Always I think this! Why should the English police interfere with us? Paul Czernikov is harmless—he means nothing! It is the *girl* Smolenski wants! He risks all our lives to get her!"

In a room which at some time had been a dining room we presently assembled. A stranger company, I swear, circumstance never gathered together. There were Poles, Germans, Spaniards, Russians, and others of undefinable nationality. Trevvy took a chair at the head of a table. I sat on his right. He indicated that the big man should sit at the further end. In his ear, I whispered:

"The name of the big man is Smolenski! The girl's husband is called Paul Czernikov!"

"Thank you," said Trevvy appreciatively. "It is useful to know!"

The woman who Trevvy had addressed as Duchess sat on his left, and now standing up: "Bring the accused man, Paul Czernikov," he said. "I wish to question him."

A murmur went around the table. I translated it as favorable to us. Smolenski, at the other end, looked right and left, and then: "You!" he said, pointing to the man who had been his companion at the Café Turc, "go with Barak—bring him here."

Followed an interval, during which muttered conversations took place about the board in languages which I was unable to follow. The woman on Trevvy's left spoke to him continuously and rapidly in a low voice, but he brushed her aside with a gesture of his arm, and taking out a notebook laid it on the table before him. He then produced a fountain pen. He was in every way the complete judge.

The door opened, and I heard a strange, metallic sound. I looked around, and what I saw was this: A pale young man whose proud, almost scornful bearing won my immediate admiration. His ankles were chained together, so that his walk was a mere shamble; his arms were manacled behind him. But in spite of this humiliation, he carried himself as I have always hoped those unhappy Frenchmen carried themselves in the Terror on their way to the great razor.

He was a handsome fellow, despite a two days' beard on his chin. His ruffled light brown hair, dilapidated collar and tie, could not rob him of his dignity. Assisted by the dreadful dwarf and the other man, he made his way towards the further end of the table. The woman sprang to her feet.

"Paul! Paul!" she cried. "Oh, my dear! Thank God I see you alive!"

At the sound of her voice, he twisted about, powerless in the clutch of the dwarf, and stared, amazed. "Nan!" he cried, "Nan!" and his voice was a groan. "Have they got you, too?"

"No, my dear." Her tones came clear and ringing. "These are *just* men."

He looked from face to face, and started perceptibly when he beheld the two figures in evening dress; then resumed his way to the end of the table. Trevvy, who had been scribbling in his notebook, stood up again:

"I have ordered," he said, "that this examination shall be conducted in English. Please bear this in mind." He stared at the prisoner. "You are accused, Paul Czernikov, of plotting to betray us to the English Secret Service. Commissar," he turned to me sharply, "what you have in your pocket." I handed him the broken Ikon. "This!" he held it up, "is the symbol of a great ideal—the ideal which all of us here, tonight, revere!"

A growl went around the board. The red man banged it loudly with his hand. The fragment was returned to me and I replaced it.

"Have you, Paul Czernikov," Trevvy continued, "directly, or indirectly plotted against us?"

"Never!" the other replied, speaking with a marked accent, and throwing his head back proudly. "Your aim is my aim, to end the present régime! I despise your methods—I would not stoop to them. But I would not hinder them; for in the disturbance you hope to create, perhaps, at last, the *right* shall rise up and conquer!" A sound, resembling the snarling of a pack of wolves, greeted his remarks.

"Silence!" Trevvy ordered. "This man is our enemy only in principle. Comrade Smolenski is risking your lives—the whole Cause—not because he believes that poor, foolish Paul Czernikov is a danger to us, but because"—he turned to the woman, and rested his hand upon her shoulder—"he covets his wife!"

“That is right! That is right!” The red-bearded man banged the table so violently that the mahogany threatened to crack. “I say so! Always I have said so! Now from Head Center it comes, and we shall see Comrade Smolenski!”

“All of us here tonight,” added Trevvy, in his cold, impersonal voice, “risk our liberty, our lives.”

He was interrupted. The pale young man of the Café Turc, who had helped to bring the prisoner to this place of judgment, suddenly sprang aside, ran along the length of the room, and confronted de Treville.

“Show me your powers!” he demanded, speaking English with a very thick accent. “Prove you represent Head Center!”

Trevvy pushed his chair away and turned to face the speaker, and I knew what was coming. Trevvy—who is much younger than his gray hair and old world manner would lead one to suppose—stole the middleweight championship from Lieutenant the Master of Clanrae as recently as ’32.

He loosed a piston rod left, which experts have assured me has never been seen in the ring since the distant days of Jem Mace! Without shout or word his accuser went down and tobogganed across the uncarpeted floor, his head coming into violent contact with the door post!

Trevvy looked at his bleeding knuckles, took a handkerchief from the pocket of his dress coat and wrapped it around his hand. “Take him out,” he directed. “Moscow will deal with him.” He turned to me: “Commissar—see to it.”

As the dwarf and another man carried the insensible accuser from the room, Trevvy faced a silent audience. “We live,” he said, “upon the edge of a volcano—we who live for the Cause. No personal motive must enter into our actions.”

“I agree! I agree!” cried the red man and banged the table furiously.

It was a curious illustration of the fact that amongst violent men, violence transcends logic. De Treville was now completely master of the situation. He sat down and scribbled some notes, until the dwarf and the other man returned, and then, standing up: “Information has been leaking out,” he announced, (The wolf chorus greeted these words), “fools threaten to ruin us. Paul Czernikov is not concerned in any way. The examination is concluded.” He nodded to the dwarf. “Release the prisoner.”

Throughout, Paul Czernikov had watched him unflinchingly, but with ever changing expressions upon his pale, unshaven face. Now came a clicking and rattling as the prisoner was freed. Smolenski’s powerful hands suddenly were banged upon the table and he sprang

to his feet.

"Sit down!" said Trevvy, sternly.

"I have something to say—"

"You have nothing to say to which I am prepared to listen. In the interests of your animal desires you have risked the lives of all of us."

"Is is true! It is true!" The red man beat the table.

"You will report to Moscow immediately; this was the object of my visit to London."

Trevvy turned to me. He held out his hand and this time without words I knew what he wanted. I took out and gave to him the broken Ikon.

"Comrade," he stretched across me. The red man stood up, his wild animal eyes glaring madly, gladly. "This is yours. See to it that our comrades in London are safe!" He rested his hand on the woman's shoulder, beckoned to Paul: "Come! You both leave England tonight. These are my orders!" He glared along the table. "Comrade Smolenski, you leave for Moscow tomorrow. Head Center will deal with you!"

WE sat in Trevvy's flat which overlooks the Green Park. Day was dawning. We had parked Paul Czernikov and his wife in a neighboring hotel.

"You see," said Trevvy, "I remembered her vaguely, and when I heard her voice, remembered her entirely. She was the Hon. Ann Vesper, younger daughter of Lord Sandholm. She married the Grand Duke Paul in Cannes."

"Of course! I remember!"

"I spotted the broken Ikon in that man's hand as we went into the café. The whole thing was built around this glimpse, and my vague recognition of the woman. These underground characters rarely know their own bosses, you see. Crime is a secret business, even to those engaged in it! However, Paul is a stout fellow, and although I don't approve of these mixed marriages I hope they will be happy."

An Egyptian Romance

Major de Treville walks into a very tight spot—and two unhappy lovers get the surprise of their lives.

WE WERE just passing the Ritz when de Treville pulled up. Two immediate consequences are to be recorded. The hall porter (it was the side entrance to the hotel) saluted, ran up the steps and got ready to swing the doors open; a pretty girl who was getting into a car paused and looked back so that her escort who was following nearly fell over her.

Such episodes, however, seem to escape the attention of de Treville. Except in somebody else's interests, I have never known Trevvy to take the slightest advantage of that magnetic appeal which he makes to men and women alike. He was watching a man entering a large car a little further along Arlington Street, escorted by a second hall porter: a swarthy man, who although the evening was warm wore a fur-collared overcoat.

"Abdul Esbek Bey," he murmured, "ex-Egyptian Minister."

We walked on, and I saw now that the car into which Abdul Esbek Bey was stepping was driven by an Egyptian chauffeur.

"You have no plans for this evening?" Trevvy asked.

"None."

"I'll have to call on old Fritters later, but he won't detain me long."

I did not know anyone called "Old Fritters," but before I could say so, he moved away and stepping forward reopened the car door which the hall porter had just closed. I saw the Egyptian start, saw his dark eyes raised to Trevvy's face. There was a muttered conversation and then Trevvy turned and beckoned to me.

"Jump in," he said; "it would be unwise to wait. Do you mind if we all pack in at the back, Excellency?"

"But not at all," said the Egyptian uneasily.

Trevvy in the middle and I on the near side of the big car, we started. De Treville's acquaintances and friendships were innumerable, for in his time he had held many posts, including that of Equerry to a member of the Royal Family. But I never remembered to have heard him speak of Abdul Esbek Bey. Nevertheless, the Bey's reputation was not unknown to me.

His wealth was reputed to be fabulous, and odd stories were told about his London house, in which at one time he had entertained lavishly. I wondered if I should regard my presence in his car tonight as one of de Treville's exploits, or merely as the outcome of an acquaintanceship which meant no more than that we were going to the Bey's house for a cocktail.

"Allow me, Excellency, to present my friend," said de Treville.

The introduction was acknowledged with a nod. And then: "You

are sure?" the Bey asked glancing aside at Trevvy.

"Unfortunately, it is certain."

"You say that these spies of Fayul's were actually in the restaurant tonight?"

"Indisputably."

"And you think they mean mischief?"

"I hesitate to say that, Excellency."

"What else could it mean?"

"One of a hundred things," Trevvy replied. "They may even think they have right on their side."

His Excellency Abdul Esbek Bey glanced again at the features of my companion. "Right on their side, you say? They are dangerous fellows whatever they think."

"I agree. My friend also agrees." Trevvy grasped my knee and looked straight into my eyes. "You think that Prince Fayul would stick at nothing?"

"Nothing," I agreed firmly.

"Ah!" said the Egyptian, and bending forward, looked long at me. "This is not reassuring!"

"Not a bit," I replied.

Trevvy squeezed my knee again, which I took to mean, "Be quiet, now"; and to the Egyptian he said:

"We can perhaps discuss this matter more conveniently, Excellency, when we reach your house."

The drive was a short one, and when the car pulled up before a mansion in one of those squares which still retain an aristocratic aloofness, we all got out. A black footman, a Nubian I thought, appeared as if by magic, raced down the steps and threw open the door. He on my left and the Egyptian chauffeur on my right, I advanced up the steps. Trevvy had paused, bowing to Abdul Esbek Bey, but he said:

"Precede me if you please, gentlemen."

Two more Nubians, in native dress, stood right and left of the door as we entered, and I found myself in a lofty hall. It was necessary to remember that Abdul Esbek Bey had resided in London on and off for many years in order to appreciate the character of this hall. I saw, glancing about me, that it resembled uncommonly the entrance to a harem.

Excellency was obviously a patriot, and one who preferred the old Egypt to the new. There were mosque lamps, carpets draped over a balcony, Persian rugs upon the polished floor; a glitter of brass and porcelain; a faint perfume reminiscent of sandal wood; and, when the entrance door was closed, a sense of having been transported from London to a palace, not only in the East, but in the East of many ages

before.

"You will be good enough, gentlemen, to make yourselves comfortable," said the Bey, leading us to a large room on the left, most tastefully appointed in the Arab manner. "I shall see that your requirements are taken care of, and rejoin you in a moment."

We both bowed formally as the Bey retired, and words which trembled upon my lips were checked by Trevvy's upraised finger. He shook his head solemnly, glancing right and left. I became aware of an uncomfortable tension. I had known it many times before in Trevvy's company, but always it acted electrically. As I had more than suspected, we were here under false pretences!

"Have you any plans for this evening?" Trevvy had asked, and I not pausing to think had replied: "None." Without delay he had made plans calculated to relieve me of boredom for the next few hours!

Double doors swung open and two Arabs entered; one wheeled a dumbwaiter laden, so far as I could see, with every conceivable kind of beverage. The other carried, upraised on one black hand, a large brass tray upon which a veritable banquet was spread in the form of those appetizing snacks usually associated with cocktail parties. The tray was set upon a small table, the two attendants stood motionless as images awaiting our wishes.

"His Excellency," said de Treville glancing at me, "is himself a strict Moslem. He is deservedly famous for his hospitality. Probably two whiskies and sodas will meet the case."

He gave the order in facile Arabic. I have some Arab myself, but I have always fallen down on whisky and soda. A twin glittering of teeth indicated that Trevvy had defined his wants in picturesque vernacular form. The drinks being placed before us: "Be gone!" he ordered in Arabic.

The Nubians saluted, went out and closed the doors.

"Well," said Trevvy, again checking words which trembled upon my tongue, "here's to the safety of our host."

Solemnly I raised my glass. Trevvy's eyes as he looked at me were signalling: "On your right—on your right!"

I drank, put my glass down, offered my cigarette case to de Treville, and glanced as casually as possible in the direction indicated. I saw a deep recess lined with mushrebiyeh; antique brass pots and water jars were set in its niches. But at one point slightly left of the center, there seemed to be a faint difference which might have indicated that there was an opening behind the woodwork. I did not look long enough to confirm this impression, but turned aside quickly.

"I don't think the danger is great," I replied, wondering if I had taken my cue correctly; "it is merely a matter of diplomacy to straighten the thing out."

“Nevertheless,” said Trevvy, lighting the cigarette which he had taken, “it has to be straightened out.”

As he ceased speaking, a sound so faint that normally I might have failed to detect it, reached my ears from the recess. I was highly strung up, I suppose; for recognition of the situation in which Trevvy had involved me had come suddenly, rather like a thunderclap. This sound resembled the soft closing of a shutter. De Treville pulled me down onto a cushioned divan.

“Since we have to make sure of Excellency’s safety,” he said in a loud voice, “let us consider the points for and against.” He bent to me and whispered: “This is going to be moderately difficult.”

“Difficult!” I whispered back. “The place is alive with Nubian servants! If we disappeared here, no one would be any the wiser. Why are we here? How on earth did we get in?”

“Very simply. Recognizing that we had nothing to do and recognizing at the same time His Excellency Abdul Esbek Bey, I opened the door of his car and said: ‘Excellency, you are being covered! They were watching you in the hotel!’ I then introduced myself, fortunately, by my proper name, and added: ‘My friend and I will accompany you.’

“I had nothing more to go on,” he continued in the same discreet tone, “until the Bey gave me the cue by saying something about Fayul. I presumed that he referred to Prince Fayul and took a chance. I was right. This is all I know. For some reason he is afraid of Fayul, who is quite a young man, by the way, and seems to be uncertain of the justice of his own cause. Upon these slender clues, my dear Digger, we have to work, and if there is anything wrong in this affair, do our best to set it right.”

I was appalled.

“He was listening to our conversation,” de Treville went on, “as I knew he would do. Now, in all probability, he has gone to the telephone to learn if I am what I claim to be.”

I was about to speak when: “Ssh!” Trevvy whispered.

We both stood up. The doors had opened very quietly.

As I scrambled to my feet a girl came in who, except that she wore a European dinner frock, conformed more closely to the poetical Arab idea of feminine beauty than anyone I had hitherto actually met. Her skin had something of the texture of a peach blossom; her wonderful, long lashed eyes were indeed in the words of Abu Tammam: “Pools to drown the souls of men.”

She had perfect little features, glossy black hair, and a figure to quote “The Book of Songs,” “which equalled the grace of a young antelope.” She opened her lips, which were Orientally full, and raised her finger. There was a glitter of little white teeth.

“I heard you,” she whispered, “from up there.” She pointed. Trevvy had been wrong. It was not the Bey who had listened. “You come to look for Ahmed?”

Instinctively she had approached de Treville, hands extended. He took her hands, bent over them and kissed her fingers.

“As you say, we are looking for Ahmed,” he replied, and gave her that smile which has inspired troops as well as women; “know where he is?”

“But, of course, he is here.”

She had all the naîveté of the Eastern woman: A child she was, yet ripely feminine.

“You will insist that they do not send him back to Egypt without me?”

“I shall insist,” Trevvy assured her. “But do I understand that Prince Fayul is in this house?”

Something in his tone, although he spoke sternly and with complete conviction, told me that this was a shot in the dark, that he was uncertain if “Ahmed” and Prince Fayul were one and the same.

“Of course!” She watched him with open eyes of wonder, as a puzzled child might have done. “He has come every night since I arrived in England. I have bribed Hassan; he used to come in through the kitchen door. Two nights ago, my father discovered him….”

“I see,” said Trevvy thoughtfully, “and what happened then?”

“He is locked up. They are going to send him back to Egypt, but I am afraid.” Her voice changed; she clutched de Treville’s arm. “No one knows he is here. They might….”

“True!” Trevvy agreed. “They *might,* as you say! Your father is absolutely opposed to the marriage?”

“He was until he knew we were lovers.”

“And now you think he may allow it?”

“No.” She shook her head and stamped her foot. “Not unless he is forced. He would rather kill him, I think. And I am afraid.”

Her words emphasized my fears. No one other than Esbek Bey and his servants had seen us enter the house. And the house, as I saw it, was a spot of Egyptian territory and a law unto itself. This sense of having been transported from the safety of London into an Arab stronghold, where princes were detained as prisoners and the law of the land was evidently regarded as not applicable, produced a feeling of coldness down my spine.

“How do you come to be here?” de Treville continued. “Since the Prince is in London, I should have expected your father to have detained you in Egypt.”

“Oh! But surely you know!” she cried, then checked, looked about her, and lowered her voice. “My father brought me here to get me

away from him—from Ahmed—but Ahmed followed me." She smiled, and her smile was the age-old, voluptuous smile of the East. Child she was in knowledge, but a woman in love. "I knew he would follow me," she added softly.

Trevvy raised her hands and kissed them again. "I beg that you will go now," he said, earnestly; "your father will be joining us at any moment."

"Yes, I must go," the girl agreed, and gave him a dazzling smile. "He is making all sorts of telephone calls, and I think they are about you!" She slipped out of the room like a shadow.

I turned, and stared at de Treville. "Trevvy," I said, "I don't like this."

"Some instinct must have prompted me to give the Bey my real name," he murmured, as he fingered gently a heavy ornamental tray. "If I had giving him an assumed name, we might really find ourselves in a difficult situation!"

"It's difficult enough as it is!"

"Yes," he agreed, and thoughtfully poured out two more Scotch whiskies. "The story is plain enough. Here are two young people desperately in love—and Arab love, as I think you know, is truly desperate while it lasts. My dear fellow, we must see that this delightful damsel is given in wedlock to the man who adores her."

For no reason apparent to me at the time, he suddenly began to speak in a loud voice. "This must be settled, Digger," he declared, squirting soda water into a tumbler. "We must do our job. This marriage must be arranged."

The faintest flick of an eyelid gave me the cue. It told me, too, that I had heard the same sound which had arrested Trevvy's attention. That hidden spy-hole had been opened again, and this time, I had little doubt by the Bey.

"It should be simple," de Treville added. "Especially since His Majesty desires this marriage!"

I did not follow the meaning of this remark at the time; but I had cause to remember it later. As the words were spoken, quite distinctly I heard the click of the closing shutter.

"Political obstacles do not count," he continued. "The Prince is of good family, and this alliance with the daughter of Abdul Esbek Bey is a fine match."

Again the door opened. A peculiarly repellent individual entered, whose nationality I found myself at a loss to define. He wore perfectly cut evening clothes, and his sleek black hair was parted on the left side and brushed across his brow in a manner which I can only describe as villainous. He was sallow, and his eyes resembled dark slits in a parchment mask. He bowed.

“Gentlemen,” he announced. “His Excellency Abdul Esbek Bey requests you to join him.”

De Treville nodded to me; we finished our drinks and walked out of the room. The parchment man standing aside to give us precedence, we found ourselves in that lofty, dimly lighted hall which, when I had entered it, I had likened to the entrance to a harem. I saw two white-dressed Nubians at the top of the stair, and another was standing motionless just inside the entrance door.

“Permit me, gentlemen, to conduct you.”

I turned. The voice had come from just behind me. Our unpleasant guide stepped forward, indicating that we should follow, and we crossed the hall. We then mounted the stair, passing one of the Nubians, and presently, at the end of a corridor, our guide having rapped very discreetly upon a door and the door being opened we entered what I gathered to be the study of His Excellency.

In contrast to the other parts of the house which I had seen, it was European and modern in its appointments.

Esbek Bey was seated behind a large writing table. He did not stand up as we came in, but indicated that we should seat ourselves. As I sat down I glanced furtively at the Bey. He was staring under his drooping eyelids at Trevvy, then:

“So many matters are worrying me, Major de Treville,” he said, “that I had to detain you. I regret this. But now I find myself in a position to thank you for what you have done, and to assure you that I believe I am in no danger. I trust you have been entertained in my absence, and so, gentlemen”—he stood up “—since doubtless affairs of greater importance demand your attention, I will wish you good night.”

For my own part, I may as well admit that I was quite willing to accept this dismissal. The study of Esbek Bey was as silent as a room in the Great Pyramid, and I longed for the rattle of London’s traffic, for homely faces, above all, for the ringing of a taxi bell which would tell me that I was speeding away from this sinister house.

But even as these hopes and fears crossed my mind, I dismissed them; for was I not in the company of Major Bernard de Treville! That he would depart because the Bey wished it was too much to hope!

Trevvy stood up at the same time that I stood up. “Possibly, Excellency,” he said, “you have misunderstood me.”

“Not at all,” the Bey returned, lowering his heavy lids a fraction more. “I quite understand your position in this matter.”

That, I thought, was a really nasty one, and remembering that the Bey had been telephoning, the dreadful idea crossed my mind that we were discovered; that in some way he had found out that Trevvy was not acting officially; in short, that he was being kind enough to give us

an opportunity of escape.

De Treville raised his monocle and stared in well simulated surprise. “In that case,” he said, coldly, “I fail to comprehend Your Excellency’s attitude.”

“Indeed?”

“Indeed, sir. Not merely is your daughter’s happiness at stake—this I confess is no affair of mine; but a match keenly desired by His Majesty is threatened by your behavior.”

This feat of mendacity took my breath away. That de Treville should have the nerve to pretend that the King of England desired the marriage of Prince Fayul and the daughter of Abdul Esbek Bey, while adding to say admiration of that remarkable man, reduced me to a state of inward terror which I cannot hope to depict! If the Egyptian should call Trevvy’s bluff, the consequences might be appalling.

There was an awkward pause. Imperturbable though he was, de Treville’s words had produced a slight change of expression upon the dark countenance of our unwilling host. “Possibly,” he said, “there is something more you wish to say to me?”

“There is,” Trevvy replied, twirling his monocle around an extended forefinger. “Since I know Your Excellency to be a strict Moslem, naturally I do not expect you to grant me an interview with your daughter; but I regard it as my duty, before leaving, to interview Prince Fayul.”

“To interview Prince Fayul?” the Egyptian voice had become very harsh. “What leads you to suppose that Prince Fayul is here?”

“We *know* he is here!” Trevvy said.

The Bey gave him a keen glance. “So you are an impostor after all,” he said, “as indeed I suspected. You are acting for Ahmed Fayul! Very well, we shall see!” He stepped out from behind the writing table. “You say that His Majesty desires this union? If it is so, I shall bow to His Majesty’s wishes. If it is not so….” He clapped his hands. Like a jinni of Arabian lore the parchment ghost appeared. “Bring Prince Fayul here,” Esbek Bey ordered in Arabic.

The man bowed and retired. Trevvy raised his monocle and examined a very handsome vase which stood upon a shelf, then: “Your Excellency is very kind… and very discreet,” he said.

Judging from the expression upon his Excellency’s face, his intentions were far from kind. But now, breaking an awkward silence, the door opened again; the sallow man stood aside, bowed and a young Egyptian came in.

He was perfectly turned out in a dark lounge suit; indeed, from his glossy black head to his well polished shoes, there was no evidence of harsh detention. He bowed slightly to Esbek Bey, as the yellow ghost went out and closed the door, then stared in an almost haughty

manner at de Treville and myself.

"This is Prince Fayul," said the Bey. "What have you to say to him?" He introduced us curtly.

"Has Your Highness any complaint to make against His Excellency?" de Treville inquired.

"None." The Egyptian stared at him in a puzzled way. "What he has done he was justified in doing."

"Sound sentiments, sir," Trevvy murmured. "But you are determined to marry His Excellency's daughter?"

A change of expression swept over the young Egyptian's face. He looked at me, then back again at de Treville. "You are here—" he began.

Trevvy raised his hand. "I am here," he said, "to ensure the marriage taking place. Excellency, I await your word that opposition will be withdrawn."

"I have said," Esbek Bey replied, "that opposition will be withdrawn, if your claims are substantial." He clapped his hands again. Again, the parchment mask appeared magically. "Call Buckingham Palace," said the Bey. "You know the number. When you are through, Major de Treville will come to the telephone."

The silent servant retired. The English are a sentimental nation, despite all their posing, and quite forgetful of the peril in which I stood personally, I found myself contemplating starkly the ruin of Treville's career. He had taken one chance too many. This last mad exploit would break him. All the world knows that Buckingham Palace has a secret number, but that it would be known to this respected diplomat was obvious. What would happen next was not so obvious.

Prince Fayul was looking at Trevvy as men of an earlier age must have looked at a prophet. "You bring hope, Major," he said, "where I had ceased to hope."

The Bey smiled sardonically; de Treville bowed and twirled his monocle. I cannot recall a worse sixty seconds in my life than those which elapsed before the yellow man returned to announce: "The Palace, Excellency!"

Esbek Bey walked towards the door and to de Treville: "Be good enough to follow," he said.

As Trevvy went out, he whispered to me: "A five to one chance! Follow on."

I followed on. The telephone from which the call had been put through was at the further end of a long corridor, and as we stood there: "Lord Fritterton is waiting to speak to you," said Esbek Bey, the sardonic smile prevailing.

There was a dim light there, but even so, I perceived something resembling a flash of triumph in Trevvy's eyes as he took up the

instrument. “Hello!” he said. “De Treville here.”

There was an interval, and then: “Hello, Fritters!” he exclaimed. “Yes, sorry to disturb you. I quite understand you didn’t expect it.”

(As he told me later, Lord Fritterton, the gentleman-in-waiting on duty at the time, had been in his regiment for three years. The five to one chance had come off!)

“It’s like this, Fritters. I’m speaking from the house of His Excellency Abdul Esbek Bey. He doesn’t seem to understand that the King insists upon the marriage of his daughter to Prince Fayul. What’s that? No, I say he doesn’t seem to understand this. I want you to make it plain to him that the marriage *must* take place immediately…. Yes, I know, Fritters—but do make that clear! His Excellency is coming to the phone now!” He turned, and handed the instrument to the Egyptian.

The latter, the smile no longer prominent, took it up, and: “This is Esbek Bey,” he said. “Yes, Lord Fritterton. I am honored to know that His Majesty takes an interest in my domestic affairs. But do I understand that he desires the marriage of my daughter to Prince Fayul?”

There was an interval during which that I gathered the bewildered gentleman-in-waiting had assured him that it was so, then: “Thank you,” said the Bey; “I regret having disturbed you. I suppose I should have accepted the assurance of Major de Treville.”

WE drove the Prince to his rooms at the Ritz. There is a Moslem mosque near London, and Trevvy had insisted that the ceremony must take place there. He had then dashed along to Buckingham Palace to see Lord Fritterton—keeping me kicking my heels in an anteroom for nearly half an hour; but when he came out:

“That’s settled!” he muttered. “Fritters will put it right.”

As I sat down, or rather, collapsed into a chair in his flat, I reflected that an evening with de Treville was almost as thrilling as an evening, one might assume, with his distinguished ancestor, the musketeer.

The Five Musketeers

"Come at once to the chateau." The telegram given de Treville was meant for another; but he never could resist the call of adventure—so he went.

"DE TREVILLE! De Treville!"

We had just stepped on to the gangway from the cross-Channel steamer and were about to set foot on French soil when I heard the name of my companion being called out.

"Did you hear that?" I asked.

De Treville nodded, raised his monocle and glanced about at surrounding faces. And presently I saw that the one who called wore a uniform and held a telegram aloft.

"Telegram for de Treville!" he repeated.

Now, I am convinced that any man bearing such an unusual name as that borne by Major Bernard de Treville would unhesitatingly have assumed the telegram to be for himself—which he did. He nodded, and took the message. He read, and imperturbable though he was, I detected a puzzled expression creeping over his features.

Then, tipping the boy, he handed the message to me silently. This was the message: "Do not join Paris train. Wait for car now on the way which will bring you direct to chateau. Athos."

The telegram had been handed in in Paris and was addressed: "De Treville, passenger S.S. *Maid of Canterbury."*

"This is extraordinary, Trevvy," I muttered. "Was anyone expecting you in Paris?"

"No one, to my knowledge. Nor can I identify any friend who calls himself Athos."

"If you are going to take any notice," I said, "we shall have to pass the Customs here, and presumably forfeit our tickets to Paris."

Trevvy took the telegram from my hand, and stared at it again thoughtfully.

"There may be a French branch of the family," he murmured, "but if so, my own branch has lost sight of it. It can hardly be a trick. This is another case of romance, crime, adventure, being literally thrust under my nose! We will wait for this mysterious car; but in the meantime as a precautionary measure, see what arrangements can be made about proceeding to Paris in the event of a hitch. You will note, though," turning and looking back towards the gangway, "that no one else who followed us down—and all the passengers are ashore now—has made any attempt to claim the telegram."

THE car arrived in due course, a commodious saloon driven by a chauffeur. The Paris train had left and no other steamer had come in. We had strolled out of the buffet and were standing rather conspicuously, our baggage at our feet, as the man, cap in hand,

approached. Without hesitation he addressed my friend: “Monsieur de Treville?”

Trevvy stared for a moment. Clearly he had never seen the man before, nor, I gathered, was the man acquainted with the passenger he had been sent to meet. I thought it odd that he did not address de Treville by his military rank.

“I am de Treville. This is my friend, Digger, and there is our baggage.”

The chauffeur, an elderly but capable servant, packed the suitcases on board and held the door open for us to enter. Shortly afterwards we were bowling along at a good speed, and soon found ourselves clear of the outskirts of the seaport.

Trevvy lighted a cigarette, turned and stared at me. His heavy brows were drawn together in a way which seemed to make his eyes smile. His short military mustache, the soft black hat which he wore, created as often before a momentary impression of a musketeer. “This thing is becoming more and more amusing,” he said.

“You noted that he addressed you as *Monsieur* de Treville?”

“I noticed. Which leads me to suppose that despite my ignorance of anyone in France bearing that name, nevertheless, there is some misunderstanding. However that may be, it is possible that we shall find the matter more entertaining than a somewhat aimless visit to Paris.”

I suppose we had covered the better part of twenty miles and were in a well-wooded district with which I was unfamiliar, when turning in between two imposing gateposts and proceeding up a tree-lined avenue, we found ourselves before one of those mellow old mansions which have always reminded me of the illustrations on the labels of wine bottles. This was a warm afternoon and I immediately began to feel very thirsty.

A white-haired butler came out to meet us, and as Trevvy stepped down on to the paved courtyard and I followed him, the butler looked in obvious bewilderment from face to face:

“Ah!” Trevvy murmured close to my ear, “there *is* a mistake.”

“Sir,” said the servant, “you are not the gentleman who was expected!” He turned to the chauffeur. “You have done a stupid thing!” he cried angrily.

“One moment!” Trevvy produced the telegram and handed it to him. “I received this and I always answer to that name whenever I am summoned.”

The butler looked at him helplessly, and then looked at me. Finally: “If you will be good enough to step this way, gentlemen,” he said. “No doubt Madame would wish to see you.”

We entered a low-beamed hallway, which appeared to me to have

undergone no perceptible change since the days of the French kings. On the panelled walls were spears, rapiers, muskets, sabres, and long-barrelled pistols. A boar's head was a reminder of those days when this was a famous hunting district. We were requested, courteously, to seat ourselves, and the old butler retired.

"What's it all about, Trevvy?" I asked in a low voice. "Have you any theory?"

"At the moment—none," he replied. "But I am anxious to obtain particulars of the other person known as de Treville."

As he ceased speaking the butler returned, bowed, and requested us again to follow him. We did so and were shown into a small but charming library, where a woman who still retained much of the beauty, which in her youth must have been remarkable, rose from an armchair to greet us. She had apparently been writing and although her smile was pleasant, I could see that she found the situation embarrassing.

"Gentlemen," she said, in a low but very clear voice, "some strange mistake seems to have occurred. If I or my nephew, who has not yet arrived from Paris, caused you this inconvenience, why, then, I must do my best to put the matter right. I am Louise Vascelles."

"Madame—" de Treville began, but she raised her finger in a quaint gesture.

"Explanations will be easier, I am sure, when you have quenched your thirst!"

She was a woman of great charm and, I thought, of fine character. When presently the three of us raised our glasses, I found myself deploring the fact that England is not a wine-growing country.

With the seemingly artless art of an experienced hostess, Madame Vascelles had put us entirely at our ease. She was the widow of a distinguished soldier, and had one daughter, Marcelle.

"Your presence here today, Major de Treville," she said, "is due to the curious history of Marcelle. My late husband belonged to an old military family. I may as well confess"—she smiled in her disarming way—"that although he prided himself on his strength of will, he was very much a slave to tradition. When Marcelle was still an infant, her marriage was arranged to a certain wealthy man of rank, insuring that what is left of our little estate, here, should remain intact in the event of my husband's death." She shrugged her shoulders.

"René meant well. Although I bitterly opposed this project, he insisted upon it. Later without consulting Marcelle, all the necessary legal formalities were complied with, the entire transaction completed, while she was still away at school. When it became necessary for me to tell her, she rebelled violently. But her father remained adamant, pointing out that she was much too young to

know her own mind, and forbidding her to discuss the subject again until he should see fit to reopen it." She smiled again, this time rather sadly.

"He was that kind of man," she added. "Marcelle was seventeen at the time of his death, and at their last interview he forced a promise from her to carry out his wishes. When you meet her—which I hope you will do—you will appreciate what this promise has cost her. She celebrated her eighteenth birthday six months ago, and the idea of marriage to the man selected for her by René becomes more distasteful every day."

She paused for a moment looking at each of us in turn as if considering whether she should go on; then: "The rest of the story," she continued, "would be funny if it were not tragic. It may surprise you to learn that, at the moment, you have stepped straight into the pages of a fairy tale."

"It does not surprise me in the slightest, dear Madame," de Treville assured her. "I rarely proceed a mile from Piccadilly without doing so."

Madame Vascelles smiled in a puzzled way, not fully understanding his meaning, and then went on. "Three young men, of whom her Cousin Etienne (he is deeply devoted to her) was the leading spirit, formed themselves into a sort of romantic society, pledged to deliver the princess from the ogre! I was powerless to prevent this mad enterprise, and only learned of it after the first attempt of the three musketeers to carry out their self-imposed task. They called themselves Athos, Porthos and Aramis, and they drew lots, it being the winner's duty to challenge the ogre or so grossly to offend him that he would be compelled to fight!"

"Good heavens!" I muttered.

"The first boy—he was the Aramis of the party—was severely wounded, which enlisted his great friend, another admirer of my daughter. He joined the organization with the title of D'Artagnan! I need not say that Marcelle has remained throughout in ignorance of all this. At short intervals throughout the past six months, three more duels have taken place. One poor fellow nearly died of his injuries. In May there was a fifth recruit to the ranks of the musketeers. He was given the title of de Treville."

"The rest, Madame, is obvious," said Trevvy.

"My nephew, the Athos of the musketeers, was severely wounded rather more than a week ago, and the bearer of the title de Treville, who was in England, was summoned to return. The date fixed for the marriage is only a month away. The fifth musketeer was expected today. The Marquis was in Paris and so to Paris 'de Treville' was to go. But I received news this morning that my daughter, who had been

staying at her uncle's house there, had left secretly and was on her way here, accompanied by my nephew! It is certain that the Marquis will follow. Therefore, an attempt was made to intercept 'de Treville.' "

Trevvy had begun to walk up and down, twirling his monocle aimlessly. I was too much amazed by Madame Vascelles' astonishing narrative to find any comment. I assumed that Trevvy was in similar case.

"A mad story," she added, "but a pathetic one, I fear."

Trevvy, apparently becoming aware of the fact that he had been walking about, sat down again. "A fine, brave story," he said. "It warms my blood to hear it! You referred, Madame, to the gentleman whom your daughter is so unwilling to marry as the Marquis. Might I inquire his full name?"

"He is the Marquis de Saint-Séverac."

"Indeed!" Trevvy murmured.

"The name may convey nothing to you, but the Marquis is regarded as a formidable duelist. He is probably one of the finest swordsmen in France."

"I know him by repute," de Treville returned quietly, "although I have never had the pleasure of meeting him."

The arrival of a car in the courtyard brought us all to a long, low window overgrown with roses. A girl wearing a white coat got out of an open two-seater which she had been driving, and assisted her companion, a young man, to alight. I saw that his right arm was in strappings and one side of his face practically invisible owing to the presence of surgical plaster. He looked dreadfully pale but when, beside the girl, he crossed the courtyard in the direction of the entrance hall, he carried himself stiffly upright and moved with a soldierly step.

"My nephew, Etienne," said Madame Vascelles, "and my daughter."

A few moments later we all met in the library. Marcelle was nearly as beautiful as I had anticipated. She had abundant chestnut hair and wide-open, fearless blue eyes. She was so like a miniature which I had observed upon the wall and taken to represent Madame Vascelles in her youth that no one could have mistaken the relationship. There were shadows under her eyes, however, and a faint worry wrinkle disturbed the serenity of an otherwise smooth forehead.

When presently our hostess had partially explained the position:

"Marcelle! Marcelle!" the young man exclaimed, and dropped down into an armchair staring at the girl. "This is the finish! It rests with you, now. Surely you are not going to ruin your life because of a promise that was forced from you? I respected your father, none more, but even your mother will agree with me, he was pig-headed and

obstinate to a degree. Such a promise is not to be respected when it involves your whole life!"

"Had I known earlier of this musketeer madness," said Madame Vascelles, but she spoke very gently, "I should have forbidden it. But now that it has gone so far, and you have suffered so much, Etienne, I almost wish that your friend—"

"Had not turned coward!" the young man cried, and sprang up, suppressing a groan as the movement disturbed the repose of his wounded arm. "And he dared to accept the title of de Treville!"

Trevvy, smilingly, had been looking from face to face. Clearly, it was food and drink to him to breathe such an atmosphere. "Ladies," he said, and included them both in his bow, "and Monsieur Vascelles, there may still be some hope of a settlement."

"The Marquis will never withdraw!" Etienne exclaimed impatiently. "Only his death could effect a settlement."

"That," de Treville murmured, "would be an unpleasant method."

"Charles was the best fencer of all—he might have done it."

"But he has failed to keep the appointment."

"Either that or he has been called away from London," Etienne groaned, "or—"

"It scarcely matters," said Trevvy. "He who *was* de Treville is not here. But I am here—and I *am* de Treville."

Those words occasioned me a painful shock. Well as I knew my eccentric friend, I had not supposed, not dreamed, that he would carry his eccentricity to the extent of embroiling himself with so evidently dangerous a person as the Marquis. Yet, knowing him, I should at least have suspected it. For, as I saw now, with a qualm, it was a situation of a character which Trevvy simply could not resist.

"Perhaps, sir," said Etienne, an unwilling note of admiration in his voice, "I fail to understand you."

"I understand Major de Treville perfectly," said Madame Vascelles, and a swift color touched Marcelle's cheeks and then left them pale again. "He is a gallant gentleman and I shall always count him my friend from this hour. But that which he proposes is out of the question. I thank you sincerely, but it is *quite* out of the question." The roar of a high-powered engine announced the arrival of another car.

"He is here!" Marcelle exclaimed.

I turned and stared out of the window. A tall, thin man was hurrying across the courtyard from a torpedo-shaped racing car. I saw a dark, hawklike face. A few moments later the Marquis de Saint-Séverac came striding into the library.

Bowing slightly to Madame Vascelles and ignoring her opening words, he fixed his deep-set eyes on Marcelle. "Why did you leave Paris?" he demanded. "To make me look ridiculous?"

She faced him unflinchingly. Etienne took a step forward, confronted the Marquis. “You shall not address my cousin in that manner while I am present!” he shouted furiously.

Madame Vascelles laid a hand upon his shoulder. “Guests are present. I wish to introduce them to the Marquis.”

Saint-Séverac scarcely glanced in my direction; his attention *from* the outset had been entirely divided between Marcelle and Trevvy. He was a fascinatingly ugly man, low-browed and with close-cropped hair which served to accentuate the size of his enormous ears. But his hands, I noted, were slender and delicate, the sinewy hands of an expert swordsman. He glared at Trevvy.

“So you are the new recruit to the ranks of these young lunatics!” he said contemptuously. “I should judge you old enough to know better!”

Trevvy inclined his head slightly, and raising his monocle surveyed the speaker with mild curiosity. “The new recruit, sir, as you say,” he said. “And entirely at your service.”

“If I don’t misunderstand you,” said the Marquis, sharply, “I should prefer to know your name.”

“De Treville.”

“Enough of this tomfoolery! Your real name, sir? Ah!” his small eyes narrowed. “I see. Your accent betrays you—and the water-waved hair. You are not a Frenchman, you are some damned fencing master who has been employed to assassinate me!”

“My name,” said Trevvy, patiently, “is de Treville. I regret the fact that my hair displeases you. But in the circumstances I am prepared to overlook your bad manners.”

“*You* overlook *my* bad manners!” The slender hands became clenched as the Marquis took a step forward. “How dare you!”

“Stop!” cried Marcelle. “I am tired of your bullying! You bully everyone. You know they have no chance against you. But in this case —”

“I think,” said Etienne in a cold voice, “since this happens to be my home, that in this case it is *I* who should protest.” Stepping suddenly forward, with his left hand he struck the Marquis on the side of the face.

“Etienne!” Madame Vascelles became deathly pale, and dropped back into her chair from which she had stood up. The Marquis remained motionless, but I saw his mouth twitching, as he glared at his attacker.

“A coward’s blow,” he said, “since I cannot challenge a wounded man.”

“I prefer to say a hero’s blow,” Trevvy interrupted, “and unreservedly I beg you to consider me as the wounded man’s second.”

The Marquis jerked his head aside and stared at de Treville. “You probably have good reasons for concealing your real name,” he remarked, “but I decline to have anything whatever to do with a hired bravo. Marcelle, I will drive you back to your uncle’s house when you are ready.” He turned and walked towards the door.

There was a moment of unhappy silence, broken by de Treville just as the other reached the threshold. “Unless, sir,” he said, and his voice had become stern, “you are prepared to discuss this matter like a gentleman—a rank not necessarily incompatible with the possession of uncommonly large ears—I shall be compelled to take other steps.”

The Marquis came about in a flash. His sallow face did not grow white in anger—it seemed to darken in a remarkable way. Impelled by a common impulse, Etienne and I sprang forward, interposing ourselves, as he leapt towards de Treville.

“Thank you, gentlemen,” said Trevvy. “If the owner of the unusual ears is laboring under the misapprehension that he is in his own sty, I feel called upon to remind him that he is in a lady’s house.”

The man we were restraining seemed to grow rigid. Then, displaying his large teeth in a sort of snarl and swallowing audibly: “The light is good,” he said. “There is a place known as the Cherry Orchard some five miles away. I accept the swords you have here, which were used last week. Monsieur Etienne has painful reasons for remembering the spot and will guide you there. I will pick up one of the neighboring gentlemen on my way and shall be waiting for you. I warn you that I give no quarter to hired ruffians.”

“IT is obviously out of the question that I should kill this arrogant fool,” said de Treville, who was driving, Etienne beside him and I perched in the dicky. “My proper behavior when we reach the Cherry Orchard has not yet occurred to me.”

Characteristically, the idea that the arrogant fool might kill *him* clearly had never crossed Trevvy’s mind.

“It’s a perfect spot for sword play.” Etienne Vascelles spoke in a loud voice over the roar of the engine.

“I know it well,” de Treville replied.

“What?”

“I was present at a fist fight there between the Master of Clanrae and Louis Byers, the French middleweight champion. The Frenchman won on points, but he suffered such heavy punishment that he was in the hospital for a fortnight. Clanrae, though loser of the contest, was on parade the following morning.”

WHAT was known as the Cherry Orchard was a small lawn or meadow adjoining a plantation of cherry trees, at the moment in glorious blossom. It was near no highway, but was part of an estate, I gathered, which belonged to the Marquis. He was awaiting us there,

accompanied by two friends. As we opened the gate and entered the meadow:

"For your convenience," he said, revealing his large teeth, "I have brought a surgeon! Captain Forestier and Dr. le Brun."

Captain Forestier, obviously a cavalry officer, raised his hat and bowed to Etienne, but utterly ignored Trevvy and me. The doctor, a middle-aged, bearded man, saluted us all, formally.

Etienne produced a case containing a pair of beautiful rapiers, family heirlooms, but ground to razor sharpness; the weapons which, characteristic of the romantic "musketeers," had been used in the last encounter.

As the case was placed on the grass, the Marquis, his back turned, proceeded to strip to the waist, revealing a scarred but muscular torso. De Treville removed his coat, beneath which he wore only a silk shirt, and rolled up his sleeves.

The Marquis, being offered the case containing the rapiers, selected one carelessly, flourished it, tested the steel and made the blade sing in the air. Trevvy took up the other, and for the first time the Marquis faced him.

"I address myself to a hired bully," he said. "I have warned you once, but since you persist, allow me to explain that I have spared my other adversaries on the ground of their youth and inexperience. These excuses do not apply to you. I have to say without regret that I propose to kill you."

As Forestier stepped forward to the side of the Marquis and Etienne took his place beside de Treville: "I, too, have something to say," Trevvy remarked. "I have no desire to kill you, but merely aim to insure the happiness of Mademoiselle Marcelle. Therefore I have a suggestion to make. The lady does not love you, and in endeavoring to force her to fulfill a contract made without her knowledge, you are behaving in a way which dishonors your name. I propose, since I have no desire to die at your hands, to endeavor to disarm you."

"Disarm me!" the Marquis replied. He turned to Captain Forestier. "Ha, ha! this fellow is funny!"

"I further propose to tell you," Trevvy went on, "that if I succeed in disarming you twice—"

"You are a fool!"

"—in disarming you twice," de Treville proceeded, "you will consent to withdraw your claim and to return all the documents bearing upon it to Madame Vascelles."

"Guard yourself!" the Marquis shouted, his wicked little eyes glaring. "Or I shall murder you where you stand! Disarm me twice! If you disarm me *once,* I give you my word I will relinquish all my claims and call myself the biggest fool in France!"

The seconds sprang back. There came a ring of steel upon steel.

I knew little of sportsmanship but enough to be aware of the fact that de Treville's reputation was international. The Marquis, himself a clever fencer, must have known this. But so convinced was he that the name was assumed, like those of Athos, Porthos, Aramis and D'Artagnan, that the idea had never occurred to him that this was the real de Treville!

I watched the clash of arms with bated breath. The swordsmen made a wonderful picture, their blades flashing in the sunlight against the background of cherry blossom.

From the very outset, one fact became obvious to all who watched. The Marquis recognized that he had met a better man. His murderous attacks, which he made with confidence, gave place to more cautious methods, as he found his point averted, effortlessly—almost it would seem, by accident. And in that first moment of recognition whilst his mind was poised, as it were, between confidence and doubt, came a curious clattering of steel, and I saw the Frenchman's sword drop to the grass!

De Treville saluted gravely. The Marquis was swearing under his breath and clutching his right elbow from which blood was trickling. Dr. le Brun ran to him. "A foul trick!" Saint-Séverac exclaimed.

"I appeal to you, Captain Forestier," said Trevvy. "You have been misinformed. I am Bernard de Treville. I was in charge of the team of British officers who visited Berlin in '34 in response to an invitation from the late General von Seckt to meet picked swordsmen of the German army. Your name (and that of the Marquis) is known to me, as mine must be known to you. Was this a foul trick?"

"I salute you, Major de Treville." The captain raised his hat and bowed stiffly. "Here is some strange misapprehension." He stared coldly at Saint-Séverac. "By my behavior I have insulted you—grossly, I fear. I plant myself at your disposal."

"Please to regard it as forgotten, Captain Forestier," replied de Treville. (The fire-eating cavalryman looked disappointed.) "This dispute is settled. Was my sword play a foul trick?"

"It was good sword play—I compliment you. I don't know how you did it! My friend"—he laid his hand upon the Marquis' shoulder—"we are gentlemen, and our word is our bond."

He stepped across to Etienne Vascelles and seized his left hand, the right being unavailable. "Blood has been shed, Vascelles, but a good cause served." He looked about from face to face, and turned again to the Marquis. "This is the end of a ghastly feud. It remains only for you to do your part, and the feud is ended."

"I can fight as well with my left hand!" the Marquis cried out.

"We are men of honor. You gave your word…."

And so, it fell out that Marcelle found herself free to marry the man of her choice.

"There is nothing quite so pleasurable," Trevvy said to me twenty-four hours later on our way to Paris, "as to be granted an opportunity to remove obstacles from the path of young love."

Count d'Ambro's Window

Light flashed in the window for a moment; mystery was behind it; two men crawled through. Result, another adventure of the gallant Trevvy.

THAT curious, bumpy movement and a change of tone in the note of the propeller occurred again.

At the height at which we were flying it was somewhat disconcerting. I forced myself to think of other things—of de Treville, my fellow passenger, and of the historic landscape seen from that bird's-eye point of view.

Trevvy and I had been in Geneva. Although the name of Bernard de Treville still appeared as that of a regimental officer, I was in a position to know that he was rarely on parade. The nature of his special duties he never mentioned.

Leaving Geneva, we had started a leisurely pilgrimage through the Bourgogne area, where de Treville seemed to have a number of friends and acquaintances. Then, at Montrachet, he had received orders recalling him immediately to London.

I doubt if the man lives into whose hands Fate tosses the ball more often. Gerry Marsh, the celebrated amateur pilot, came in an hour later. Perhaps, though, this was not a coincidence. He might have come to fetch us.

However this may be, we were now flying low over the valley of the Aube and below us lay the vineyards of the champagne district. Three crested hills, their slopes mantled in vines, flat meadows yellow with corn, and here and there, dotted about the prospect like fairy castles, châteaux made famous by many a wine list….

It came again—that uncomfortable vibration and queer noise.

"There's something the matter with Gerry's machine," said Trevvy. "I have never been entirely air-minded, but this curiously syncopated movement which has developed, while it might appeal to a lover of hot jazz, leaves me quite cold." At which moment:

"Sit tight!" came the warning; "something wrong with my coffee mill!" Then, hawk-like, we began to swoop down.

I saw the pilot's objective—a smooth patch of greensward bordered by a willow-lined stream and adjoining a white-walled house.

Gerry made the landing as a gull alights on a calm sea. And certainly the spot he had selected was ideal for the purpose. It proved to be a smooth and well-grazed meadow. But the presence of a stone wall, which I had overlooked from the air, nearly proved our undoing. On the level surface we taxied at alarming speed towards it. There was little choice, save the willow-bordered stream on the north—and we came to rest less than two lengths from the wall.

"Pretty near thing that," said Gerry as we scrambled out. "I couldn't see the wall from upstairs. I tried once before when I was

with the Air Force in Palestine to drive a big plane through a stone wall, and it took me forty-eight hours to sleep it off!"

"I have to thank you," said Trevvy, focussing his monocle upon the distant house partly hidden by trees, "for refraining from attempting that experiment again."

"Any idea where we are?" I asked, as Gerry enthusiastically proceeded to explore the mysteries of his ship.

"Not the slightest."

"Twenty-five miles west of Bar-le-Duc," Gerry shouted.

Trevvy stood looking about him at the trees and the high wall.

"Evidently an old place of some sort," I said.

"Bit of luck!" came from somewhere under the plane. "If I can patch up the leakage, I shall want an extra hand or two to get her round into the wind. Suppose you dash up to the house and see what can be done!"

It had been a perfect evening, but during the last ten minutes threatening clouds had begun to mass in the east, and now, frowning down upon us, quite shut out the sunshine. A premature dusk descended as, leaving Gerry tinkering with his engine, de Treville and I set out in the direction of the house, the white walls and red roof of which we could see through the trees.

There was a curious silence; the sort of silence which often precedes a thunderstorm—as though all the birds were shrinking in their nests. Unsensational though our landing had been, I wondered nevertheless that it had failed to attract attention from the inmates of the house, or from anyone who might be about the evidently extensive property.

"H'm!" said de Treville, pulling up as we came to an opening in the trees.

Another stone wall confronted us. The house lay somewhere beyond.

"No way in here, Trevvy."

"Let's push along left. There must be a gate somewhere."

Exploration in that direction, however, failed to discover any means of entrance. No dog barked. There was no sound of human life.

We tried along to the right. Turning, I looked back, but from this point it was impossible to see the plane. An arched opening in the high wall now offered a view of a rose garden.

"This should lead us somewhere," Trevvy muttered.

We walked into the garden. It showed every evidence of neglect. There was a moss-grown sundial in the center. The many beds of roses were overrun with weeds. It was so dark now that when presently, ascending several steps by a fishpond, we came at last to a sight of the house, I was not surprised to see lights shining from several ground

floor windows.

"Evidently somebody at home," said Trevvy. "From the look of the place I suspect a caretaker…. Did you see *that?"*

In the newly-come darkness I nodded. "It must have been an effect of reflection."

"There's no sunshine whatever—it's out of the question."

Trevvy stared from the terrace where we stood at a closed and curtained French window. Right and left of this were long, narrow, uncurtained windows. And it was from these as we had come up from the rose garden that lights had shone out.

"Someone turned the lights out as we came on to the terrace."

It was an odd situation, but one fully in keeping with the general trend of de Treville's life. And as the thought crossed my mind:

"To be forced down into the grounds of a house whose owner one doesn't know," said de Treville, "is perhaps unusual; but for the inhabitants to turn out all lights when one approaches is the sort of thing which happens only to me."

We made our way round the angle of the house, up steps and down steps, until we came to the main entrance. The place in part was old, but had been reconstructed and, I thought, made smaller by some comparatively recent owner. One of those glass doors protected by iron scrollwork confronted us. Beside this door there was a bell push.

Trevvy rang several times. Dimly, somewhere in the interior of the house, we could hear the bell. But ringing was of no avail.

"I might have distrusted my own powers of observation," he said, "but you agree with me that that room overlooking the terrace was lighted up when we arrived?"

"I do."

We returned to the scene of this mysterious happening. We tested the French window and those outflung right and left of it. All were secure. We peered in. But the room was so dark that beyond the fact that it was a long, narrow apartment I could make out little else.

"Back to the window overlooking the rose garden," said Trevvy. "We have not tested that."

We walked along the terrace. The sky now was grimly ominous.

"It's not clear to me," I said, "what we propose to do."

"Personally," de Treville replied coldly, "I propose to find out why the occupant of this house declines to afford me an opportunity to apologize for alighting upon his property." De Treville's reactions are sometimes unpredictable.

The French window, which now we proceeded to examine, had curtains drawn behind it—but, to my surprise, it proved to be unfastened. Trevvy pushed it open, drew back the curtains and stepped into the room. I followed him.

Several explanations of the mystery had presented themselves to my mind, nor, as I entered, could I disguise from myself the fact that our behavior was high-handed—indeed that from the moment we stepped inside this silent house we stepped outside the law. Such small matters never disturb my friend's serenity.

"It's frightfully dark in here," he said. "I have no torch. Have you?"

"No."

"It'll have to be a match, then, and I have nothing but French matches."

At which moment as I fumbled in my pocket, light sprang up dazzlingly.

I found myself, as I had rather anticipated from what I had seen through the west windows, standing in a long, narrow saloon which must have occupied the whole of the western front of the house. It was furnished in an ultra-smart way which bordered upon vulgarity. There were glass tables and distorted busts; uncomfortable armchairs and unrelieved pale-blue walls.

Set near to the window which we had first approached was an oval glass-topped table on which I saw glasses and a bottle of wine. Actually, all these details presented themselves to my mind later; because at the moment when the light sprang up I was concerned only with the man who was responsible for this illumination.

He stood at the far end of the room near a door beside which I saw there were a number of switches; a tall, sallow man, handsome in an unpleasant way. He had gleaming black, wavy hair, a penciled mustache and well shaped but sensual features.

He was covering us with an automatic! "Put your hands up!" he spoke sharply in French.

I was tempted to obey, for the man looked dangerous, but Trevvy, groping for his monocle, raised it and holding it slightly away from his eye surveyed the speaker with an air of mild surprise. "Surely," he said, "after I have made my apology for this intrusion, you will permit me to explain why it took place."

But the man with the gun remained stationary; his heavy-lidded eyes were menacing. "Put your hands up."

De Treville dropped his monocle. "If the behavior of my friend and myself," he said coolly, "is unusual, yours, if I may say so, is inexcusable."

I saw the barrel wavering. Trevvy was staring at that oval table upon which the bottle of wine stood.

"Who are you? What have you come for?"

Following the direction of my friend's stare, I noticed something which I had not noticed at the moment of my entrance. There was a woman's handbag on the table.

Ignoring the weapon which still covered him, de Treville walked forward and touched the handbag. “I rather think,” he replied, “you know. Where have you hidden her—and why?”

Upon hearing that characteristic query, I resigned myself. Long experience of de Treville had never enabled me to discern when he was playing poker and when he was acting upon some piece of concrete evidence which had come into his possession. I have never known a man of more alert mind.

So that now I was asking myself: has he recognized the monogram on the handbag? In other words—does he know what he is talking about? Or is he angling for exact information?

The man addressed made an odd grimace and put the automatic in his pocket. “I still dispute your right to force a way into my house,” he said. “But in the circumstances, if not legal, I suppose I must regard the intrusion as excusable.”

“It was inevitable,” de Treville assured him. “You heard me ringing. Did you suppose I should go away until I had seen her?”

“She is not here, Captain du Bartas.”

I had now stepped up between the two, for I remained uncertain of the issue. Glancing at de Treville, I detected a flicker in his eye which told me that he was indebted to our host for the name, Captain du Bartas.

Leisurely he took up the handbag, fixed his eyeglass in place, and faced the sallow man. “If that is so,” he said, “how do you account for the fact that her handbag lies on this table?”

“I found it in my car when I returned here from a tennis party at the Savignac’s to which I had the pleasure of driving your wife.”

De Treville inspected the man from head to foot. He wore a well-cut suit of cream serge, light-blue shirt, and a dark-blue necktie; a blue-bordered handkerchief peeped from his breast pocket; his socks were blue; his shoes of soft leather had white uppers and blue toecaps—the sort of shoes which someone has called “correspondent’s.”

“If you have just returned from tennis, I cannot imagine why you should have changed otherwise than into dress clothes.”

The agitation of the other, although he masked it wonderfully, was nevertheless apparent. For de Treville’s French, although fluent, is not Parisian, which fact had been overlooked.

“I was not playing—I have a sprained wrist.”

“In that case,” said Trevvy, taking up two champagne glasses, one of which was filled and the other empty, “perhaps you will present me to the lady who has left her wine.”

This brought a furtively ugly look to the sallow face. “Suppose I refuse?”

He could not have better chosen his words; they were just of that

kind which delighted Trevvy's heart. The submerged musketeer came to life.

True, the eyeglass was incongruous, but that wavy graying hair, the classical profile, the whole poise of the figure scoffed modernity. I found myself again in the antechamber with de Treville's ancestor in the Louvre.

As if those gods (strange gods I often thought them to be) which at once thrust Trevvy into most difficult situations and at the same time defended him from the consequences had planned an appropriate background, at this moment the storm broke.

A flash of lightning so vivid that it was visible in the lighted room came almost instant on the words. Following a brief silence, a crash of thunder seemed to shake the house.

"No doubt," said de Treville in that menacingly cold voice which he could command, "before taking such a step you will consider my reputation?"

"The reputation of d'Ambro stands for successes—in love and war!"

And that name, d'Ambro, awoke a memory. I wondered if those deities who deemed to guide Trevvy's life had now thrown him across the path of Ambroise, Comte d'Ambro, last of an ancient line, whose amours had supplied French journalists with so many scandalous paragraphs. Evidently Trevvy shared my memories.

"I take it, Count d'Ambro," he said, "that you wish to discuss this matter further?"

Another vicious flash cast zigzags of light across the rugs, the polished floor. A shattering boom followed and the door before which Count d'Ambro had stood throughout our interview was suddenly thrown open.

A woman stepped into the room!

"Henri!"

As she cried the name in a way which combined supplication and happiness, her expression changed. She was one of those slender brunettes with an ivory white complexion; her dark eyes were her outstanding feature—they were magnificent. She wore a very simple summery frock, and her slim bare arms would have arrested the attention of a sculptor. Now, she was hopelessly confused as she looked from face to face.

Count d'Ambro had sprung forward as if to intercept her. She had waved him aside. She stared at Trevvy.

"You have his voice, his Gascon accent," she went on. "I thought __"

Trevvy stepped forward and bowed in that courtly manner which must be a heritage, for it has no part in the life of today. "Madame du Bartas," he said, "perhaps my Gascon accent may he traced to my

Gascon ancestor. I accept your words as a compliment."

"But what is all this!" Count d'Ambro exclaimed angrily. "What is the meaning of this intrusion? Have I been talking to an impostor!"

"No, no!" Madame du Bartas said, and touched his arm. "I was so frightened—but now I think I understand." She turned to Trevvy. "You are a friend of Henri's…. I thought I knew all his friends!"

"I am one of his friends, dear Madame, who has not hitherto had the pleasure of meeting you. My name is Bernard de Treville. Count upon me as you would count upon him."

He raised her outstretched hand and kissed it. Count d'Ambro watched the salute with a set face, and then: "I regret to pronounce the words," he said, "but I suspect you are a liar!"

Madame du Bartas sprang forward—so did I. Trevvy never stirred.

"I don't believe," he replied smoothly, "that this is the time for me to answer that remark. Something far more serious than my personal dignity is at stake." He turned to Madame.

"As your husband's friend, I shall always of course be a diplomat—for I know a little of human life. But if I am to put his mind at ease, perhaps, since I have this gentleman with me, you would give us your confidence."

He presented me to Madame du Bartas with all the formality of a court official. She smiled—it was a nervous smile—extended her hand, which I kissed ceremoniously. Count d'Ambro, grimacing sardonically, gave no sign of acknowledgment.

"I am peculiarly interested," he said, "to find myself in the presence of a soldier who submits to insult."

"Overlooking for a moment," de Treville went on, twirling his monocle around an extended forefinger, "the deplorable behavior of the gentleman in whose company I find you, may I ask for the facts, Madame du Bartas? I am convinced that I could present them to your husband in a manner which should satisfy him."

"Please, please!" she cried. "Promise me that you will say nothing to him—nothing! Captain de Treville—"

"Major, dear Madame."

"Forgive me!" Her eyes opened in a startled way. "You are his senior officer! Yet he has never spoken of you in his letters! Oh, Major! It would break his heart—he would never understand! You know him! I cannot make out how you came to be here—someone must have told him! You are a man. I despair of convincing you! But I am truly, truly not to blame! You could not have come at a worse"—she paused, grasped de Treville's hand—"or at a better moment!"

"The situation grows more and more amusing," said Count d'Ambro. "An officer claiming field rank, who has no regard for his personal honor, is called upon to defend the honor of a woman!"

The man stirred me in an odd way. Suddenly, I saw him as something poisonous, and I suppose my feelings were reflected in my expression, for:

"Be good enough," said de Treville, raising his finger, "to leave this matter to me. I should be disappointed—and offended if you took it out of my hands. Dear Madame du Bartas, I feel it is my duty to ask you: how do you come to be here this evening?"

"She will not answer," said Count d'Ambro. "It is my affair. If her husband demands an answer, I am prepared to give it to him."

At that the dark eyes of Madame du Bartas flashed a danger signal; they blazed upon Count d'Ambro.

"In this matter, monsieur, I shall please myself!" She turned to Trevvy. "As you must know, in Henri's absence, I have been staying with my family not five miles from this house. Ambroise d'Ambro is my neighbor, and has been my friend—but perhaps"—with a flash of her eyes in the direction of the Count—"not in the degree to which he aspired. Henri and I were living in Paris up to the time that his regiment was ordered to Africa. Now that he has settled down I am going to join him."

"I know," said Trevvy, gravely, "how you have hated the separation."

"Hated it!" She raised her hands in a Gallic gesture. "Three months married and then separated! Have I hated it! But here, with my family, I have found some little forgetfulness. Count d'Ambro has been kind—"

"I am sure," Trevvy murmured, *"he* would be kind to a pretty woman!"

Madame du Bartas continued: "I am not a fool nor a child, Major de Treville; until to-night I accuse Ambroise of nothing, but I have not been blind to his intentions. You know Henri, his Gascon temperament? I beg you—I *implore* you to tell him nothing of what you have learned. He would return from Africa immediately, he would desert his regiment—there would be death! It might mean—"

De Treville put his arm around her shoulders. He is the only handsome man of my acquaintance who can do this without romantic implication. "My dear Madame du Bartas," said Trevvy, "with every confidence you may leave this matter in our hands. But I must beg of you to tell me how you come to be here this evening."

"An end of this!" cried Count d'Ambro, with a stamp of his foot.

"An end of *you!"* cried Madame du Bartas in a sudden frenzy. "You drove me to Savignac's this afternoon, excused yourself and went away. You called later offering to drive me back. At this deserted place, where there is only a gardener or a caretaker, your car broke down. Such an old story but one that is sometimes true! We came in,

not by the front door but through a French window which you unlocked, so that you might telephone a garage—"

"I understand the open window now," de Treville murmured. "It had been puzzling me."

"And I, also, understand it, Major!" said Madame du Bartas. "For not even the caretaker knew we were here! Of this fact, Monsieur d'Ambro, you informed me! And in this room, at that table, what did you propose to me? What liberties did you attempt?"

"H'm," Trevvy muttered. "Who turned the lights up?"

"*I* did!" Madame du Bartas replied. "When footsteps were heard, Monsieur d'Ambro turned them out."

"And you hid yourself, thinking that your husband had followed you," said Count d'Ambro coldly.

"What else could I do? Should I be compromised? I had not deserved it."

Lightning flashed faintly. There was a distant roll of thunder.

"Hello!" came a loud, cheery voice. "Glad I've rounded up my missing passengers! Found an open window and buzzed in! Hope I don't intrude. Got the plane in order again—but we shall have to shove her round." Gerry Marsh, oily but breezy, stepped in.

COUNT D'AMBRO drove Madame du Bartas and myself back to her family's residence which, as she had said, was about five miles distant. I explained my existence in terms which had been prompted by Trevvy, made my dutiful observances to Madame's charming mother, drank a glass of wine, and, sitting as a passenger in the back of the car, was driven back by Count d'Ambro to the empty house which had been the scene of this singular episode.

Count d'Ambro's driving, on the return journey, reduced me to a state of cold perspiration.

Gerry and de Treville, assisted by a muscular and taciturn gardener, who had appeared from somewhere or another, had succeeded in shoving the plane into a position from which Gerry could take the air.

"It is interesting to know," said Count d'Ambro, following us out to the meadow, "that there is a French officer of your rank"—he was addressing Trevvy—"who is at once a squire of dames and a man without personal honor."

Gerry, who was adjusting his equipment, turned aside and grinned expectantly. The caretaker-gardener, who had received a substantial tip, stood agape.

"I feel it my duty," said de Treville, "to correct you in two particulars, Monsieur le Comte d'Ambro: First, I am not a French officer, although by descent a Frenchman: second, I *do* resent insult!"

Only by the dropping of his eyeglass, which now swung upon its

ribbon, could one have anticipated what was to follow. But on the last word, he launched that piston-rod left which had won him the championship of the British Army from Lieutenant, the Master of Clanrae.

Count d'Ambro passed into an oblivion in which his loves and hates alike were forgotten.

Gerry made the air. We reached Croydon less than two hours late.

The Persian Portfolio

The adventure of the water-color drawing and the burglar who was working on commission.

"HOW rarely," said de Treville, dreamily watching Perigal, his remarkable man-of-all work, placing decanter, syphon and glasses on a table, "modern life offers these small oases of peace."

Perigal, whose movements are nearly silent and who rarely speaks unless addressed, has a face resembling a Benda mask: intelligent, but lifeless.

We were seated in the study of Trevvy's flat, which is on the top floor and offers a pleasant prospect of the Green Park. The noise of Piccadilly was muted. Here, in the heart of London, a man might think and work peacefully.

Trevvy was an incorrigible first-nighter. We had just returned from the opening performance of a pretentious but dull musical play. "I may be wrong," he said, as Perigal in response to a curt nod went out and closed the door, "but I give that show three weeks."

He prepared two drinks. He had changed his tail coat for a shabby, silk dressing gown, his shoes for a pair of much-worn but comfortable red leather slippers. And now, having taken care of my needs, he was loading a disreputable looking clay pipe which was his companion in hours of relaxation.

Major Bernard de Treville is the only man of my acquaintance of my social standing who smokes a clay pipe; although I know a famous actress who smokes a briar, and an even more distinguished sister Thespian who favors cigars.

We settled down in that comfortable silence which is only possible between old friends. I studied Trevvy with interest: that handsome face; the wavy gray hair; the strong, well-tended hands. I was reminded of a painting reproduced as an advertisement by a well-known tobacco firm in which certain Elizabethan worthies are shown smoking clay pipes. Yes, undoubtedly, Bernard de Treville was a throwback.

Perhaps those singular adventures which came in his way as autumn leaves in the path of a country pedestrian were no more than materialized memories of his distinguished ancestor who had been Captain of the Black Musketeers in the days of Cardinal de Richelieu.

We smoked and drank in silence for a long time, then: "Have you by any chance noticed," said Trevvy, without changing his lounging position, "an unaccountable scuffling sound which seems to proceed from somewhere outside the windows?"

It was a still but cloudy night with no moon, and as he spoke I recognized subconsciously that I had noted the sound to which he referred. It was very slight, and if we had been talking, I doubt if

either of us could have heard it. But now, listening intently, I detected it again.

"Occasionally," said Trevvy, in a low voice, "I have feathered visitors on the balcony, coming over from the Park, including a stray owl, which visits me from time to time, in search of tidbits—but this sound is unusual."

The unusual sound now became more marked, and Trevvy suddenly stood up. There was a French window in the study opening on to that small balcony to which he had referred, and now, jerking the curtain aside, he stepped out into the darkness. I sprang up to follow, and as I did so heard a muffled cry, then:

"You must either come in," came Trevvy's cold voice, "or I shall throw you into Piccadilly. Make your choice."

"I'll come in, guv'nor!"

Watching, I saw a strange thing. Trevvy had a firm hold-upon the coat collar of a man whom he was assisting to climb over the railing of the balcony. A moment later, he pushed the man into the study.

I was temporarily dumb with amazement; for I could not conceive by what means the intruder had reached that point. He was a small, wiry fellow, wearing a dark suit, coat collar turned up, and what I took to be silk socks (he wore no shoes) until I recognized the fact that his feet were bare but stained or painted black.

His dark hair was cut close to the skull. He had a lean face with undershot jaw and deep-set eyes, and a sort of knapsack was strapped to his shoulders. I noted the muscularity of his hands.

"Stand over there," said de Treville. He dropped back into the armchair and took up his clay pipe, which he had placed in an ashtray. "I take it you thought I was out?"

"Listen, guv'nor," the man replied huskily, "you've got it wrong…. It wasn't *your* flat I was after! Really you've got it wrong, sir."

This was my first meeting with a cat burglar. Appreciating the fact, as I appreciated it now, that in some manner beyond the understanding of the layman he had succeeded in climbing unobserved the face of the building from Piccadilly to Trevvy's balcony, I studied him with interest.

"You regard this as a defense?" de Treville asked.

"No. I didn't say so, guv'nor; I was just explainin'."

One thing there was which I admired in this acrobatic crook. He accepted his fate like a sportsman. There was no trace of fear in voice or bearing.

"I'm pretty well known in my branch. But tonight I wasn't workin' on my own."

"What do you mean?" I said. "You are a burglar, I assume?"

"At night, yes; window cleaner durin' the day."

“Very interesting,” Trevvy murmured. “But your statement that you were not ‘working on your own’ is somewhat mystifying. For whom were you working? What was your object?”

The man looked about him, a slight trace of bewilderment now betraying itself. This placid acceptance of his felonious trade he evidently found upsetting. “Well, it’s a fair cop,” he admitted. “I can’t do myself no good by tryin’ any funny business—because Vine Street Police Station knows me well.” He swallowed and looked from face to face.

“Have a drink,” said Trevvy. “You must be tired after your climb. Help yourself.”

The man hesitated for a moment, glancing suspiciously at the speaker. Then, crossing to the little table, he helped himself to a modest whisky and soda. When he turned and faced us again, his manner had subtly changed. “Thank you, sir,” he said, and took the drink at a gulp.

“And now,” de Treville continued, pulling at his clay, “sit in that chair, there, and answer quite frankly the questions I am going to ask you.” The man sat down.

“First, what’s your name—your real name?”

“Jack Bean.”

“Very appropriate. Some beans are climbers. How long have you been a burglar?”

“I started in twenty-three; I work for a window cleanin’ company. That gives me the lay of the land—see? I did very well until the Christmas of twenty-five—then I got copped and I was away for five years.”

“Where were you—on Dartmoor?”

“No—at Wormwood Scrubbs. And I don’t want to go back!”

“There seems to be some possibility nevertheless! You are well known in the criminal world, I suppose?”

“Yes. They call me Larry the Lizard.”

“But your name is Jack?”

“It don’t make no difference.”

“What were you trying to do tonight?”

“To reach the next flat to yours—but there’s no balcony so I had to come this way.”

“Indeed!” Trevvy raised his heavy brows. “The flat of Mrs. Reigate?”

“That’s it.”

Mrs. Reigate was a charming widow who occupied the small flat sandwiched between de Treville’s and a larger one which adjoined on the same floor. She lived there with a maid. Except that she was not of English nationality, I knew little about her, our acquaintance having

been confined to occasional meetings in the lift. She was a titian blonde who bestowed dazzling smiles upon Trevvy. Trevvy, however, remained unmoved.

"Has she valuable jewelry, or something?" he asked.

"I don't know," said the Lizard. "It wasn't jewelry I was after. This job is a commission."

"A commission!" I exclaimed.

"That's it!" He turned to me. "I was on this job for a fixed price. What I got I had to take back. It was described to me very careful. A large portfolio made of cream Persian leather with figures worked on it in colors. It ain't locked up—it's somewhere in the sittin' room—and it's full of water-color drawings."

"Assuming you had found it, how did you propose to get out? Climb down the face of the building again?"

"Not me!"

Unfastening the black knapsack fastened to his back, Larry the Lizard produced a pair of shoes into which he slipped his feet, and an ingeniously folded cap which he patted into position. He reversed the upturned collar of his coat and put on the cap.

There was lettering on the coat collar, and declaimed around the cap band, I read: "Thomas Cook & Son."

String and a quantity of folded brown paper were now laid upon the table. "Easy, ain't it? Down the stairs!"

Treville smiled grimly. "Most enlightening," he murmured. "One more question: the name of the man for whom you are acting?"

"Calls 'imself Schubert. A fence, whose name don't matter but who plays straight, brought 'im in."

"Brought him in where?"

"The Red Lion, Brixton."

"And you came to an arrangement with this man Schubert and with the receiver?"

"Yes—to pinch this 'ere portfolio. Schubert told me that the dame and her maid would be out tonight."

"You have explored the ground?"

"Yes—know every inch of it."

"And where were you to take the portfolio?"

"Red Lion in the mornin'."

There was a long silence, de Treville puffing away at his pipe and I smoking a cigarette. Larry the Lizard fidgeted, his deep-set dark eyes darting from side to side. His fate was in the hands of a man whose character was quite outside his experience. Trevvy knocked out the pipe in the ashtray.

"Go ahead with your job," he said. "But when you have the portfolio, don't take it to Mr. Schubert at the Red Lion, bring it down

to me, here."

"Where's the catch?"

"There is no 'catch.' I am more than curious to find out why this man Schubert wants the Persian portfolio. You can satisfy my curiosity. I shall then return the portfolio to Mrs. Reigate. Is that quite clear?"

"Clear enough, guv'nor. But where do I stand?"

"You stand or fall by your success," Trevvy replied coldly. "Bring the portfolio to me, and you will have my permission to walk out. Fail to bring it, I shall hand you over to the police."

"There's something funny about this!" the Lizard murmured. "I was told you was a Guards officer—but you don't act like one!"

"Get on with your job!" de Treville snapped in his parade ground voice. "I shall be waiting on the landing."

Larry the Lizard stowed his shoes, cap, brown paper and string back into the knapsack and restrapped it; turned up his coat collar and walked out on to the balcony, followed by Trevvy. I brought up the rear. "Here goes!" said the man. He swung himself over the railing with acrobatic agility and then, staring up: "You're both in on this now!" he said.

The block was stone-faced and I literally held my breath as the man worked his way along to a window of the adjoining apartment. His method was indeed lizard-like. He used his toes as fingers. He crossed that terrifying gap, glued to the face of the building, employing the merest crevices to support himself.

Presently, craning out, I saw him clinging to the ledge of Mrs. Reigate's window. It was partly open, and pulling himself up, he reached in and raised the window. Giving us one quick side-glance, he disappeared from view. The window was gently closed.

"Stay here!" said Trevvy rapidly. "He might try to double on us and make a getaway of some kind. I shall wait on the landing for him." He left.

Below me, the life of Piccadilly raced on. Lights twinkled; lights blazed. I could see many windows of one of London's most fashionable hotels, but none of them interested me except the unlighted window on my immediate right.

It did not reopen. Then, in a surprisingly short time, I heard Trevvy's voice—and that of Larry the Lizard. I returned to the study.

Larry the Lizard came in carrying a large portfolio of soft, cream leather illuminated in extravagant colors. He handed it to de Treville who followed. Trevvy closed the door.

"Good work, Larry the Lizard," he said. "Have another whisky." He passed the portfolio to me. "Glance through the contents," he suggested, "while I prepare drinks."

He addressed his attention to the decanter and syphon. The portfolio resting on my knees, I began to inspect its contents. I found water-color drawings of woodland scenes; fair but not outstanding in quality; of riverside prospects and of rose gardens. Turning them over I wondered more and more why the mysterious Mr. Schubert should have commissioned a cat burglar to obtain this collection. Then, reversing a drawing of a Kent hop garden, I suppressed an exclamation.

I was looking at a carefully drawn plan, the work of a finished architectural draughtsman!

"Trevvy!" I exclaimed, as he crossed, with a drink, "look at *this!"*

"I heard of their loss only yesterday from the War Office," said de Treville.

De Treville is something of a mystery even to his closest friends. At this time to my certain knowledge he had done no regimental duties for a long period, but if he had been seconded for special reasons, he had not troubled to mention the matter. The fact remained that he seemed to get information ahead of the Press. Larry the Lizard watched him with gleaming eyes.

"Good work," Trevvy muttered, turning over drawing after drawing and finally extracting four plans. "This is the lot, I think." He placed the plans on his desk, went once more through the drawings and then thoughtfully laid the portfolio on the carpet. He turned to our unwilling guest in whose sunken eyes a light of hope had begun to dawn.

"You are to meet this man Schubert at the Red Lion, Brixton tomorrow," Trevvy said. "At what time?"

"Opening time."

"You will take your instructions from me. Be there at the hour appointed. Take my advice—let there be no mistake. The moment you see Mr. Schubert say to him: 'I was caught—the cops are after me—clear out!' If you fail to carry out my orders—it's Wormwood Scrubbs."

"I've got it, guv'nor! I meet Schubert at the pub an' I say: 'I was caught, the cops are after me—clear out!' Then I buzz off!"

"Don't fail. It will be *your* loss."

He crossed and opened the door. Larry the Lizard rapidly transformed himself into a man from Cook's and went out. "Goodnight," he said. The door closed.

"Chatham Dockyard!" said Trevvy. "It was a very ingenious robbery. The public will never hear of it. If that fellow Bean fails to lead the police to the man Schubert—it won't matter much, because Scotland Yard will get him in any event. If our friend the Lizard is not on the job, then he will be included in the haul. This is a remarkable

discovery, you know!"

"It would have been remarkable," I replied, "if it had been made by anyone but yourself!"

"Yes!" De Treville thoughtfully knocked out the clay pipe. "You have often heard me say that a hundred yards from my own front door I can find crime—romance—mystery. I must confess, however, that this is the first instance in which they have come to find me in my own study." We were silent for a while, then:

"I am taking no further steps," said de Treville studying the plans through his monocle, "until Mrs. Reigate returns. Oddly enough, I had never suspected her! But it is obvious that she bought these stolen plans ahead of some other competitor. The other competitor employed a burglar to recover them. Mrs. Reigate belongs to the most dangerous profession in the world…. She is a spy."

"It's incomprehensible to me, Trevvy, not that she's a spy—that's obvious—but that she should leave such valuable property lying about in a portfolio. She should have locked it in a safe."

"My dear Digger! She practises as an amateur in water color! What could be more harmless than her portfolio of studies? The place to look for an important document when it is possessed by a clever thief is on his writing table or mantelpiece; anywhere but in a secret safe, the sort of safe which any efficient detective would find. But efficient detectives continue to overlook the obvious. Evidently Mr. Schubert is a disciple of Edgar Allen Poe. This woman has plied her trade all over the world. Her portfolio of water-color sketches has served her well. Don't despise the device—it is very clever."

I heard the lift ascending. We were silent again. We listened. It stopped on the top floor. Then I heard Mrs. Reigate's musical voice: "Goodnight!"

I heard the clash of the lift gates. I heard the lift going down again.

"Ah, well!" said Trevvy. "I feel that duty calls. Are you ready?"

In response to our ring, Mrs. Reigate opened her door. I realized now, owing to some difference in the lighting, that her eyes, which I had thought to be blue, were oddly tinged with green. She wore a dinner frock, which displayed perfect shoulders to their greatest advantage, and her smile, when she recognized de Treville, was one of authentic welcome.

"Why, Major!" she said. "How charming of you to call upon me at last!"

I stood behind de Treville (I was carrying the portfolio). Mrs. Reigate had noticed neither myself nor the portfolio.

"I heard you return, Mrs. Reigate," said Trevvy, "and owing to something which occurred in my own flat tonight, I thought it only proper that I should call upon you."

“Something which occurred in your flat?” The green-blue eyes narrowed momentarily.

“Yes! May we come in? Allow me to introduce my friend.”

The flat was smaller than Trevvy’s, but Mrs. Reigate’s sitting room was a charming apartment. It was simply but perfectly furnished. It reflected the taste of a cultured and artistic woman. For some reason, and I knew the reason to be Trevvy’s visit, Mrs. Reigate, whom I had always counted a woman of great self-possession, was so flurried that as I placed the portfolio inconspicuously upon a side table, she failed to notice its presence—she was all eyes for Trevvy.

“Please let me get you a drink, Major de Treville,” she said.

“Thank you, Mrs. Reigate,” de Treville replied judicially, “but before I trouble you, perhaps you should know what occurred tonight.”

“Yes! Something has occurred? Please tell me.” She stood in front of him, hands clasped. She was a pretty woman and, as I could see, one confident of her appeal to men.

Trevvy twirled the cord of his monocle and began to swing the eyeglass round and round an extended forefinger. “Your flat was burgled tonight, Mrs. Reigate.”

“What!”

The word was spokes in a different key—a new motive was behind it. Momentarily at least my fascinating friend was forgotten. Mrs. Reigate darted to a really beautiful Venetian table on which I saw an ivory statuette and a big bowl of red roses. She turned—and I saw a terrorized woman.

“I have been robbed!” she cried. “Someone has robbed me tonight!”

“The purpose of my visit, Madame,” said Trevvy gravely.

He turned to me and signalled that I should hand over the portfolio. I handed it over. He placed it in her hands. She watched him unflinchingly—but terror lurked in her eyes.

“I detected a cat burglar, Mrs. Reigate—indeed apprehended him on his way down from your flat. I succeeded in obtaining possession of this portfolio, which was apparently all that he had stolen—but the man got away. I trust nothing of value is missing. But I am about to put through a call to Scotland Yard. It may not be too late to apprehend the thief.”

Mrs. Reigate took the portfolio, still watching Trevvy. Then, with a gesture of nonchalance which won my admiration, dropped it on a chair. “Thank you,” she said. “It was a queer, a stupid thing to steal. But it is recovered, and if it makes us better acquainted, I am glad that this strange thing happened. And now, please, yourself, your friend—”

“Myself and my friend,” said Trevvy, bowing, “must depart at this

moment. You have five minutes, Mrs. Reigate, in which to look through your portfolio…. Scotland Yard will then have to take a hand."

DE TREVILLE, once more shedding his tail coat and slipping into the silk dressing gown, began to load the clay pipe. I was listening intently, as he settled back in his armchair. And presently the sound came which I had anticipated.

The closing of a door—hurtled footsteps—a dim bell—the whine of the ascending lift. Then, the clang of the gates, the gates again—and the descent of the lift.

"She's gone!" said Trevvy, reaching out for the telephone. "She's an enemy of England—but nevertheless she deserves a start. Actually, I shouldn't have let her go! If she had been a mercenary spy, I should not have done so, but she happens to be acting for her own country. I respect such women."

Cinderella's Slipper

Who could guess the secret of the lovely lady? Not even Trevvy, who had never guessed wrong before.

"PRETTY girl, isn't she?" said de Treville, turning to me suddenly.

She was.

I had noticed her at the moment that we entered the lobby of the Savoy Grill. We had been to the first performance of a pre-boomed screen play—one of those occasions which Trevvy rarely missed. Many of the stage and Hollywood notables whose presence had thrilled the audience were now entering the restaurant. Possibly, I thought, the beautiful stranger was a foreign film star. Yet, with her wavy and perfectly groomed chestnut hair, long-lashed dark-blue eyes and clear complexion, she looked more Irish than anything else.

The simplicity of her dress—she wore a plain black frock and black shoes with golden heels—offered no clue. But her companion, a heavily-built Teuton, certainly might have been an agent or manager.

Trevvy looked at her with frank, smiling approval. In any other, such a look could not fail to be insolent: in the case of Bernard de Treville it was a delicate compliment.

I walked across to the cloakroom attendant to deposit our hats, and as I waited at the little counter, discovered the Teutonic gentleman beside me. He treated me to the sort of glare which Trevvy would have described as septic.

He had a very thick neck, and his somewhat flat head presented the appearance of being shaved, so closely was his gray hair cut to his skull. A short, bristly mustache suggested the possibility that he might be, or have been, a soldier.

I pocketed the check and turned to look around for Trevvy.

He was seated at a small table deep in conversation with the unknown beauty!

I wondered what his object had been in not mentioning that he knew her, but as I crossed he stood up and presented me in his punctiliously courteous manner. She proved to be a Madame Bouvard and the possessor of a most fascinating smile.

"It's ages," she remarked, making way for me to sit beside her, "since I saw Major de Treville. Isn't it, Major?"

"Ages indeed," he replied, smiling. "I am flattered that you remembered me."

Madame Bouvard's friend, having parked his hat, came hurriedly across the lobby and joined us.

"Oh, Colonel," said Madame Bouvard—she had a low caressing voice, and a sort of lazy nonchalance which was queerly attractive —"Major de Treville and his friend are joining us for supper. Won't that be nice?"

Her companion, whom she introduced as Colonel Erckmann, did not seem to regard the prospect with much enthusiasm. He clicked his heels and bowed stiffly, however.

"Perfect!" he snapped.

De Treville insisted upon ordering drinks, and being well known in the establishment, booked a table on the Colonel's behalf in a selected position. The maître d'hotel treated us with a deference which was certainly impressive. Madame Bouvard was a charming conversationalist as opposed to a chatterbox. By the time that we went in to supper she had infused a note of gaiety into the party which began to have some perceptible effect even upon the Colonel.

She studied the people about her with a childlike interest.

"I have been abroad so long," she declared, "that to find myself in London again seems like an answered prayer."

She asked for information regarding a number of people dotted about the room, and de Treville, gracefully and wittily, gave thumbnail sketches of notables, ranging from a famous actress to a much divorced foreign gentleman of title, whom he described as a professional husband.

Nothing had cropped up so far to give any clue to the relationship between Madame Bouvard and Colonel Erckmann; a more ill-assorted pair it would be difficult to imagine. He, taciturn, bovine, eating silently but enormously; she, toying with her supper, behaving like a young girl at her first party.

But, presently having lured the two soldiers into a conversation on Japanese tactics, she devoted the whole of her attention to me. "Writing must be a terribly difficult profession," she said.

"It is a really no more difficult than looming or watchmaking," I replied. "Except that the writer has to make his watch go without springs or weave his carpet without wool."

"And are you weaving a carpet without wool, now?"

"Yes; I have a rather ticklish job in hand."

I felt an unmistakable tap on my knee.

As I met the glance of the beautiful eyes of Madame Bouvard, who sat on my right, I realized that it was her foot which had touched me… and that this had not been an accident. She slightly lowered her lashes, and: "Do you think you can pull it off?" she asked.

I SUPPOSE the society of de Treville would sharpen any man's wits. The urgent tapping of the little foot upon my left knee left no room for doubt as to her meaning. Colonel Erckmann seemed to be burdened by a constant suspicion, but at the moment he was not looking in my direction.

Slipping my hand under the tablecloth, I pulled off the black shoe, which possessed a high golden heel, wondering what I was expected

to do next.

"Some jobs are so deceptive," said Madame Bouvard, again flicking her eyelashes: "they may not be what they seem. But, then, as a writer, you naturally never judge by appearances—I mean you always look *inside* things!"

Dropping my left hand to my knee I inserted two fingers inside the shoe.

I found a little note folded there.

"I suppose," she continued, "you often have to search a long time for material?"

"Yes, it is often necessary," I replied.

"Are you one of those tidy workers? I am so interested in writers. I mean, when you have consulted a book, for instance, do you leave it lying on the floor or do you put it back?"

Again the long dark lashes flickered.

"Invariably I put it back."

I held the small shoe firmly and she slipped her foot into it. The note I smuggled into a trouser pocket.

"I thought you would be a neat worker," she said.

Turning to her neighbor, the Colonel, she changed the conversation, an exhibition of self-possession which, in a girl of her age—I judged her to be no more than twenty—filled me with admiration.

I was at once excited and mystified. I had become a *confident* of the charming Madame Bouvard. My anxiety to obtain a glimpse of the note was intense. However, I knew I must be patient, and although it would be untrue to say the supper was socially a success, nevertheless, it lasted a long time.

Colonel Erckmann constantly consulted his wrist watch. He was at no pains whatever to disguise the fact that he wished to be alone with his fascinating friend; that nothing would give him more delight than to see the back of de Treville and myself. It was after midnight, when:

"I really think," he said—he spoke good English with a guttural accent—"that this party which has been most delightful must now break up." He turned to Madame Bouvard. "Don't you agree with me?"

"I am quite happy here, Colonel," she replied, smilingly, "but I suppose all good things must come to an end."

"But of course! This is the way of life!" He stood up, beckoning to the waiter, and, as he examined his bill: "I hope at some other time," he said, a note of finality in his voice, "to avail myself of your invitation, Major, to take lunch at your club."

But Madame had other views. Looking from myself to de Treville, she remarked composedly, "I'm going to get my coat—but you simply

mustn't go until I return!"

Colonel Erckmann, who was counting out money on to a plate, gave her one of his wicked glances. But, waving her hand gaily, she went off towards the lobby, a graceful, attractive figure, high gold heels tapping, glittering in the subdued lighting.

"Ah!" said the Colonel—"there, waiter, that is correct." He hesitated a moment as the waiter went away; then: "Perhaps now," he said, "I shall go and get my hat!"

We all stood up.

De Treville thanked the German gentleman for having entertained us and repeated his invitation to lunch with him at an early date. Vaguely, Colonel Erckmann replied that he would bear it in mind (he was already headed for the door) but that his visits to London were brief and took place at long intervals.

In the lobby I drew Trevvy aside, and as the Colonel crossed to the cloakroom to collect his hat, I pulled out the note from my pocket and stared at it eagerly. It was very brief and scribbled in pencil: *"Don't leave me alone with him."*

That was all. I handed it to de Treville. He studied it through his monocle as though it had been some queer exhibit.

"What on earth's the meaning of this?" I asked. "Who is this Madame Bouvard?"

"I haven't the faintest idea!" Trevvy replied calmly, returning the note to me.

"What!"

"Not the slightest. She claimed my acquaintance in the lobby just as you turned away, saying that her memory for names was appalling, but that she remembered me quite well. Scenting a possible adventure, I pretended to recall the meeting. Actually, I had never seen her in my life before tonight!"

WHEN presently Madame rejoined us, her white shoulders concealed by a fur wrap:

"It's a shame we can't get another drink here," she said. "That's the only snag about dear old London—and I really don't want to go home yet."

"London is London," said the Colonel cryptically. There was a note of anger in his voice. "And so, gentlemen—" He turned to de Treville.

"True enough," said Trevvy lightly, "but Madame is Madame. Now, I'm going to suggest—although it is far from exciting—that we all return to my flat, which is at no great distance from here, to share another bottle and to make the most of this unexpected but charming reunion."

The impatience of Colonel Erckmann to dispense with our society now became so palpable that as we entered Trevvy's big car, I

anticipated an explosion at any moment, but instead in the darkness during the drive I detected Erckmann whispering to his charming companion, urgently and frequently. But apparently his appeals fell upon a deaf ear, for she talked gaily throughout the short drive and as she stepped out of the car: “What use is life,” she exclaimed, looking up to where a new moon sailed in a cloudless sky, “to those who won’t live it!”

Going up in the lift, again I heard the Colonel whispering behind me. His heavy features had assumed a sullen expression. Perigal, that amazing man-of-all work, having run the car into a neighboring garage, reappeared like something out of an Arabian fairy tale, and produced a bottle of perfectly-iced champagne as though he had been, not driving, but awaiting our return with definite orders.

The wine served, he retired silently.

“Here’s to our last meeting,” said Trevvy, chinking his glass against Madame Bouvard’s, “and to our next. Your health, Colonel Erckmann —” and to me: “Blessing and peace.”

Solemnly we drank this queer toast, and Trevvy, passing a box of cigarettes, we settled down in the delightfully appointed room that I knew so well.

I was consumed by a growing curiosity. If, as the Colonel’s attitude suggested, Trevvy and I were intruding upon a love affair, why had Madame in so strange a fashion appealed to me not to leave her alone with her friend?

In spite of her gay conversation, however, and Trevvy’s unfailing attention to the duties of a host, tension grew and grew, until at last Colonel Erckmann stood up.

“I thank you, Major de Treville,” he said, his eyes fixed ominously upon Madame Bouvard, “on behalf of my friend and myself…. And now, we must go.”

He bowed to Madame. She sat back in the long armchair smiling up at him.

“Really, Colonel,” she replied, “I have been thinking it over, and I have quite made up my mind. Since I *have* to be arrested, I prefer to be arrested by Major de Treville!”

The Colonel’s complexion visibly changed.

“You mean… what?” he demanded.

“Just what I have said.”

Gracefully Madame Bouvard flicked ash into a tray upon the arm of her chair. She had long, slender fingers and a kind of feline indolence. As Trevvy stood up and rang the bell, Colonel Erckmann moved towards the door, bowing stiffly to each of us in turn. “I did not understand the situation,” he declared, his eyes shifting rapidly from my face to Trevvy’s.

His former manner had changed—he had become extraordinarily uneasy. As the door opened and Perigal appeared, handing him his hat: “Goodnight,” he said gutturally.

Trevvy walked to the door with him, leaving me alone with Madame Bouvard. She selected another cigarette from a box on a small table beside her, and I stood up to light it. As I did so she watched me under her long lashes. “Thank you for getting me out of an awkward situation,” she murmured.

I heard the whine of the lift, vaguely heard de Treville’s voice, and a moment later he returned, resuming his seat.

He stared across at our visitor.

“If it does not distress you,” he said, twirling his monocle around an extended forefinger, “I should be interested to hear an explanation of your odd behavior.”

A change came over the face of Madame Bouvard as he spoke. She dropped her mask of gaiety. The effect was swift as a tropical sunset. “You shall hear my explanation,” she answered quietly, “and when you have heard it”—she shrugged her shoulders—“you must do as you see fit.”

She stared for some moments at the lighted end of her cigarette, watching the spirals of smoke ascending.

“I left Essen in Germany three days ago. For certain reasons, I proceeded from there to Baden-Baden in the Black Forest. You see”—she smiled sadly—“I was ostensibly traveling for pleasure. From Baden-Baden it was my intention to go to Paris, but during luncheon at the Stefanie Hotel, on Wednesday, imagine my feelings when I looked up and saw a German officer whom I knew seated at a table in the corner of the room, watching me!”

“I am endeavoring to imagine your feelings,” Trevvy murmured; “but knowing nothing of the relations between yourself and this German officer, I find it difficult to do so.”

“Of course!” Madame Bouvard puffed at her cigarette for a while, and then set it down in the ashtray. “I have really begun my story from the wrong end! But, you see, I didn’t think that anyone in Essen recognized me. I thought I had entirely got away with it; and by going to Baden-Baden, and not going directly to Paris, I supposed that I should remove any trace of suspicion. Unfortunately, I was wrong.” She laughed nervously. “I had been followed.”

“Followed?” I echoed, for I found Madame’s story more than bewildering. “Followed by whom, and for what reason?”

She fixed her beautiful eyes upon me almost pathetically. “Followed by Colonel Erckmann.”

“I gather,” said Trevvy patiently, “that you had met Colonel Erckmann before?”

"Of course—but I didn't know that he suspected me."

"Suspected you of what?" I asked.

"Of being what I am—an international agent!"

"Great heavens!" I exclaimed, and stared at her incredulously. "*You?* But, I mean—"

"You mean," de Treville broke in, "that she is much too young and beautiful to play such a part except on the screen?"

He had put my unspoken thought into words. Madame Bouvard extended a slender hand.

"I was trained to act in this dangerous business," she replied quietly, "almost from a child. But in this case I underestimated the intelligence of my enemy. Yes, I knew Colonel Erckmann! And when I saw him in Baden-Baden, watching me, I knew that I had tripped up somewhere. I pretended not to have seen him—I was thinking very quickly. I finished my lunch, stood up and walked out on to the terrace. I could see him watching me through the window….

"All my belongings, my frocks, my jewelry, everything I had, were upstairs in my room and would take at least an hour to pack. The Rheingold Express left in twenty minutes for the Hook of Holland. Just as I was—fortunately I had money in my handbag and my passport also—I walked out into the garden as if going for a stroll—and the moment I was out of sight of the dining room, dashed for a taxi!"

De Treville had now set his monocle in place and was watching her, his face quite expressionless. She spoke more and more rapidly, trying, I thought, to hide her agitation.

"I caught the train. It was moving out, but I jumped on board. It was not full—this is not the season for Baden-Baden. I arrived at the Hook of Holland and came on board the steamer. I had thrown him off the trail! I arrived in London yesterday and went to a small hotel in Bayswater where I had stayed before. This frock—" she glanced down at herself—"I bought ready-made together with a few other necessaries. I had to get in touch with Paris and to let my chief know what had happened. I wanted someone to meet me here in London: I was afraid to go to Paris. All evening I was expecting news, but none came; and when it got quite late, I felt so lonely and unhappy that I decided to go to the Savoy for supper, thinking I might meet someone I had known in my London days, years ago."

Again she paused, biting her lip.

"Sitting in the lobby as I walked in, was Colonel Erckmann!"

Trevvy's fixed stare never left her face. I, too, was watching her intently. "I can only say," I muttered, "that the German Intelligence staff employ some uncommonly clever men. I take it that Colonel Erckmann is an Intelligence officer?"

Madame nodded, did not speak.

“What occurred then?” Trevvy asked coldly. “You are a British subject, I take it?”

“No. French, by marriage.”

“Your husband?”

She shook her head sadly. “Dead!”

“What did you do?”

“What *could* I do? He had everything in readiness to take me back to Germany for trial! We were leaving tonight. His orders were to not let me out of his sight until we had reached German territory. I was terrified—I knew what my fate would be.”

“In the circumstances,” said Trevvy, “the Colonel gave up his prey without much of a struggle!”

“Naturally!” Madame Bouvard replied, eyes fixed frankly upon him. “He could not very well declare himself in the circumstances—could he? His case would have been little better than mine!”

“But why,” I asked—for my ideas were becoming more and more muddied—“did he accept his dismissal? When you stated that you preferred to be arrested by Major de Treville, what did you mean?”

“Just what I said,” she answered quickly. “You see, I am acting for France—not for England. Because of my record—which possibly, Major, you may know—you would be entitled to put me under arrest, tonight.”

De Treville rang the bell, his every movement closely watched by Madame Bouvard.

“The second bottle, Perigal.”

Perigal, having appeared, withdrew. Madame Bouvard laughed softly, “Thank you for this… adjournment,” she said.

There was a short silence. She took up her cigarette from the ashtray and continued to smoke. Perigal came in and poured out three glasses of wine, then, retired silently.

“Amazing story,” Trevvy murmured. “A really amazing story. But, of course”—he held his monocle slightly away from his eye and surveyed Madame critically—“not true.”

Madame Bouvard now shed the mask of tragedy as swiftly as she had taken it up. Lying back in the armchair, she laughed heartily.

It was musical laughter and I found it infectious. I detested myself beginning to smile. Glancing at Trevvy, I perceived a twinkle in his eye.

“Of course it isn’t true!” she said.

Taking up my glass, almost without thinking I drained it at a gulp. The amazing Madame Bouvard was too much for me. I stared at her in open-eyed astonishment.

“In the circumstances,” Trevvy remarked, standing up, crossing and replenishing her glass from the bottle, and then refilling mine,

“perhaps I may be permitted to inquire—do you know any more of these amusing stories? I find your conversation distinctly entertaining.”

Madame Bouvard laughed. “I have had a most wonderful evening,” she declared. “I am really rather sorry for poor Colonel Erckmann, but I am sincerely indebted to you both for getting me out of the pickle.”

“Why,” I inquired, “are you sorry for Colonel Erckmann? If he is *not* a German Intelligence officer, what is he?”

“I haven’t the slightest idea!”

This was altogether too much for me. I stared appealingly at de Treville. The fact was beginning to dawn upon me that this was a case of Greek meets Greek.

“I live in Streatham—a perfectly respectable suburb, as you may know,” Madame Bouvard continued, “and I am employed in the Bank of England. I find life rather dull. Suburban tennis parties, bridge, and an occasional visit to town. A cousin who has more money than I shall ever have, and who is about my figure, recently gave me this outfit. I set out tonight without telling anyone at home where I was going, and sat in the lounge of the Ritz, to see if adventure would come my way.”

Trevvy fixed his monocle in place, and watched her with appreciation.

“Colonel Erckmann (at the time, of course I didn’t know his name) who was apparently at a loose end, got into conversation with me. He invited me to dine and go to a theater with him. As there didn’t seem to be anything better going, I accepted. I told him my name was Madame Bouvard. My father has a picture of a canal in Venice by that painter, so I selected the name at random. Fortunately, I speak French fairly well. His attentions during the evening became rather pressing, and in order to explain how he had come to find me sitting alone in the Ritz, I told him that I was a Soviet agent who had just reached London, to find Secret Service men watching my hotel. I said that having dressed, I had slipped out by a back entrance and dare not go back!”

De Treville, recognizing his own tactics, nodded sympathetically—his nod was keenly appreciative.

“Colonel Erckmann offered to take care of me. From a call box at the Savoy he secured accommodation at the Ritz. When, Major de Treville, you smiled at me so sweetly, I thought of a plan to get rid of him. I scribbled a note in the cloakroom, but he was watching me so closely that I had some difficulty—” she glanced in my direction—“in passing it over.”

She laughed again.

“That is a true story. I am afraid I’m a horrible little impostor!”

De Treville stood up.

“If you would care to give me your real name,” he said, “and your actual address, I believe I could obtain more congenial employment for you. In the Bank of England your talents are wasted!”

The Dutch Cheese

Once again the amazing Major de Treville steps into an adventure and solves a mystery.

FROM the window of my apartment in "The Regal Athenian," I could look down upon a panorama of a large part of New York. It was possible in clear weather to obtain a glimpse of the open sea and of the Statue of Liberty. I was restless this afternoon—the work I was there to do was not going well. I hoped that de Treville would be back shortly.

His unexpected arrival in New York rather more than a week earlier had frankly delighted me. No man could long remain bored in Trevvy's company. And although the purpose of his visit, like so much in de Treville's life, remained something of a mystery, I knew that he was visiting the United States on a diplomatic mission of a delicate character. He was not proceeding to Washington, but was expecting a representative to pay him an informal visit here, at "The Regal Athenian."

The European mail had come in half-an-hour earlier; a number of sealed and official envelopes, for Trevvy, several ordinary letters, and a large, heavy, square parcel. As I stared at this, the door opened.

Perigal, most silent of manservants, entered, carrying a bundle of newspapers.

"More," he said.

"Paragraphs about the Major de Treville, Perigal?"

Perigal nodded. His leathery features registered no more expression than those of a ventriloquist's dummy. He went out again.

I took up one of the newspapers. Perigal had neatly marked the place in pencil, and there it was again: the paragraph to which Trevvy had objected so much had evidently been syndicated. It announced that the distinguished officer had arrived on the *Queen Mary* on a diplomatic mission to Washington; this despite the fact that Trevvy to my knowledge had not interviewed one journalist. He was greatly annoyed as he did not desire to attract attention.

As I was turning the newspapers over, I heard the clang of elevator doors, swift, light footsteps, and a moment later de Treville entered, tossing his hat onto a settee. He smiled in cheery greeting, but drew down his brows at sight of the pile of journals.

"What, more of it?"

"Yes. But perhaps, now, it doesn't matter."

"Very annoying," he muttered, "nevertheless."

He quizzed one of the offending items through his upraised monocle, and then dropped the glass on the end of its silken cord.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Mail just in!"

Perigal entered with refreshments. I sat down to a whisky and soda

while Trevvy looked through his mail. Apparently there was nothing of great importance. Presently he came to the large package, and: "What's this?" he murmured, weighing it in his hand.

He cut the string, opened the wrapping, and from a small wooden box, extracted a Dutch cheese! A card was pinned to the cheese. He read it silently and handed it to me. This was the message: "Keep in icebox until I arrive to share with you. Anne."

I saw that Trevvy's face wore a puzzled expression. "Who is Anne?" I asked.

"One knows many people called Anne," he replied, "but I can think of no Anne who would send me a Dutch cheese; nor do I recognize the writing."

He examined the cheese again with interest, and re-read the brief note several times.

"Well," he said, "I suppose I must be patient until Anne arrives for her share—to which she is quite welcome."

He took the cheese into the kitchenette attached to our apartment, and placed it under a cover in the icebox.

We went to a theatre that evening; Trevvy was an inveterate playgoer. And, on our return: "Something wrong electric equipment," Perigal announced. Perigal never used two words where one would do.

"What's wrong with it?" Trevvy inquired.

"Don't know. Man came. Coming again."

Nothing of outstanding importance occurred during the next two or three days, except that a burst of inspiration and energy enabled me to complete the work which I was there to do. De Treville informed me that he, also, had finished the business which had brought him to New York and proposed to return, if the date would suit me, on the following Saturday.

This gave us several days to amuse ourselves and suited me quite well. But to this moment I recall the afternoon when, having acted as Trevvy's guide, for I knew the city well whereas this was his first visit, and returning about tea time, I saw three letters, two for me and one for de Treville, lying upon the table.

Beside them was a familiar looking square parcel. "Hello!" Trevvy raised his eyeglass. "What's this!"

He examined the label carefully, cut the string and opened the parcel.

It contained a square wooden box… and in the box was *a Dutch cheese!*

His face quite expressionless, de Treville scanned the note pinned to the cheese, then handed it to me. It was as follows:—"Here's another. Arrive Thursday. Cheese and beer for supper. Anne."

I met Trevvy's fixed stare. He said nothing, but taking up the torn wrapping, examined the postmark and the stamps.

"From Amsterdam," he murmured. "The other, also, was despatched from Amsterdam. However, it appears that 'Anne' is coming to supper on Thursday, when probably the mystery will be solved. Of all cheeses I like Dutch cheese the least, so that Anne's supper promises to be a failure."

He continued to handle the bright red cheese as one might handle some rare piece of art. Then, reflectively, he walked into the kitchenette and placed the second cheese under a cover beside the first cheese.

During the next half hour he seemed to be slightly distrait. Presently, he excused himself, saying that he had some shopping to do. He did not invite me to join him, and I speculated about the character of his purchases. But he was back very soon, carrying a brown paper parcel. "An additional delicacy for Anne," he explained.

He retired to the kitchenette, where he was employed for some time, presumably placing the delicacy in the icebox. He had an appointment that evening which I knew would detain him late. I dined alone and then returned to our apartment. As I entered: "Electrician here again," Perigal announced.

Having nothing better to do, I strolled through to the kitchenette, where I could hear the man tinkering, and looked in. He had a large box provided with carrier straps on the floor beside him, and at the moment of my entrance was partially invisible behind the icebox. His traveling tool chest, as I saw, contained all sorts of implements and a number of little compartments, each provided with a sliding door. He was in overalls, and, as I saw him, apparently possessed no head. Presently the head emerged: "Good evening, mister," he said looking up at me.

"Good evening."

He was a lean, good-humored looking fellow, hatchet-faced, gray-eyed; and as he rose up, dusting his hands:

"All clear," he announced, "I couldn't fix it before as I didn't have a new plug along. But it's all O.K. now."

He replaced odds and ends in his traveling workshop, fixed the straps and put on a cap which bore the badge of a local electric company. "Good night," he called.

I was asleep when Trevvy returned.

Thursday evening as a matter of course we kept open. We dined lightly.

"After all," said Trevvy, "if I have to eat Dutch cheese tonight with Anne, I must be sparing in my diet."

At about half-past eight the doorbell rang, and I heard Perigal's

voice. Then he entered, “Miss Anne Hoskinson,” he announced, and stood aside.

Anne entered. She was a smart brunette, with large, intelligent, dark eyes. She looked like Paris, from her smart little hat to her dainty shoes. De Treville bowed. I looked on wonderingly… for an expression of profound bewilderment had crossed the piquant face of Anne Hoskinson. She stared at me; she stared at Trevvy—then:

“There’s something funny and wrong, here,” she declared.

“I am more than sorry,” Trevvy replied, “but I am Bernard de Treville and I have been looking forward all the week to your arrival. Won’t you please sit down?”

He placed an armchair for her and provided her with a cigarette. She watched him all the time with a singular expression.

“And now,” said he, “there seems to be some little mystery.”

“Mystery!” Anne Hoskinson exclaimed—“it’s just dawning on me that there’s no mystery at all! I have been played up by a crook! That’s the mystery.”

“I regret to hear this. I am afraid I don’t understand.” Anne Hoskinson laughed: it was not a mirthful laugh.

“I don’t suppose you do,” she said bitterly, “But if you are Major de Treville—and I guess there’s no room for doubt—I have been a bigger fool than I thought I had it in me to be.”

Watching her as she spoke, I certainly felt that anything resembling foolishness was not to be anticipated in the case of this singularly self-possessed young lady.

“Give me the answer if you can,” she went on. “While I was in Europe—I have only just got back—I made the acquaintance of a man who had quite a lot of charm. It was a different kind of charm from yours, Major, and he wasn’t like you a bit in any way. The thing is that he called himself Major de Treville!”

“Remarkable,” Trevvy murmured.

“He was one of our party in Paris. Afterwards when we moved on to Holland he came along too.”

“Do I understand that he used my name, everywhere he went?”

“He certainly did.”

“Was he staying at the same hotels as your party?”

“No—he never once stayed at the same place. But he seemed to know Europe.”

“Was he an Englishman?”

“Now I come to think of it, I don’t believe he was… although he spoke perfect English, it wasn’t *your* kind.”

“Could you describe my shadow?”

“He was not so tall as you, but always very smart, and spoke the different languages like a native. He had a little black mustache: his

hair was very dark and shiny—but he didn't wear an eyeglass."

"I doubt, judging from your description, if your mysterious friend is in any way related to me."

"I doubt it, too," Anne Hoskinson agreed. "Although even now I don't know what his game can have been. But in Amsterdam—I sailed home from Amsterdam—he left a ship ahead. And when I saw him off, he asked me to buy two Dutch cheeses of a kind he was particularly fond of, but which he had forgotten at the last moment, and to forward them to him here. Right here to this hotel! He said when I arrived a week later I should find him at the Regal. He gave me the money for the cheeses and gave me this address. I could get only one at the first store I went to, and had quite a hunt to find a second. Now, Major"—she stared at him with a slight smile—"if you can give me the answer you're smarter than I am!"

It occurred to me as she spoke—indeed in a subconscious way the idea had been present all along—that the anxiously expected Anne had a harsh streak in her makeup; not exactly vulgarity, but a sort of brazen assurance.

De Treville surveyed her gravely. "There is certainly some problem here. You would seem to have been the victim of a strange impostor."

"I've been a victim all right!"

"When the cheese arrived—"

"Have you got it here?" Anne Hoskinson asked rapidly.

"I have it here, and since I should hate you to be disappointed entirety, I have laid in a stock of good beer—"

Trevvy stood up and pressed a bell. The door opened and Perigal entered pushing a wagon on which very attractively set out, were two Dutch cheeses, rolls, butter, beer and pickles.

Anne Hoskinson's expression when her eyes rested on the two Dutch cheeses was so extraordinary that I was quite startled. She stood up from her chair, glancing quickly, penetratingly, at Trevvy, then:

"If you please, Major," she began.

But de Treville interrupted her. Taking up a long knife, he tapped one of the cheeses. "Suppose," he suggested, "we start on this one?"

"Really," Anne replied, (her manner was almost wild) "I'd rather not!"

Trevvy surveyed her with an air of mild surprise; and, whatever temporarily had disturbed her normal composure, under that appraising stare she entirely recovered it. She rested her hand on Trevvy's arm.

"Just imagine," she said softly, "what a shock it's been. I don't mean that I cared a lot for Bernard—at least, he called himself Bernard—but I realize what a fool I've been. As to eating his cheese,

now … well, it would just choke me!"

"My dear Anne," said de Treville—"if I may call you Anne—you must remember that I have been looking forward to this supper. Surely we can forget the other Bernard for an hour!" He pointed the knife toward the cheese.

"Stop!" Anne clutched him feverishly. "I daresay it's just silly sentiment—but I simply couldn't bear to have you touch that cheese! Listen!"—she held his arm—"Give me the beastly things! Let me take them away. But—" she hesitated looking up at him—"maybe you like Dutch cheese?"

"It is not my favorite cheese."

"In that case, I'll take it away. Just humor me—I'm terribly upset. And if it would really disappoint you to miss our supper, I'm staying in New York tonight. If I could go back and dress, I should be delighted to have supper with you anywhere—anywhere where there's no Dutch cheese!"

She smiled brilliantly and hugged his arm. But Trevvy stepped aside, adjusted his monocle and surveyed her coldly. "You are a poor gambler, Anne," he said.

That astonishing remark reduced me to a state of even greater stupefaction: I could not understand its significance. It meant nothing to me. But a dramatic change in Anne's expression told me that it meant much to her. I saw her bite her lip.

And suddenly I recognized the fact that de Treville knew, or had deduced something from the peculiar circumstances of the case, which was not apparent to me. His next words did not help me greatly.

"Your accomplice, the 'electrician,' " he went on deliberately, "will no doubt have told you that although he secured the first cheese and left another in its place, the second one which he removed was not that sent from Holland?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Anne said hoarsely.

"The mistake could so easily have been his…. One Dutch cheese is uncommonly like another. But in point of fact the mistake was *not* his. I removed the cheese which came in the wooden box from Amsterdam and replaced it with a similar one which I succeeded in buying on Fifth Avenue!"

I saw Anne Hoskinson cast a swift glance in the direction of the door.

"I discovered a small mark upon the label of the original cheese, and this I duplicated on the one I had purchased. I don't think it would be worth while to cut into either of these. The interesting specimen—the second that arrived from Amsterdam—is here." Stooping to a lower shelf of the dinner wagon, he pulled out something scrapped in a white napkin, unwrapped it… and there was

a *third* cheese!

Whilst I still stated in bewilderment at de Treville, Anne Hoskinson darted for the door which led into the lobby. At the door she stopped, turned, and stared back. The door was locked.

"We shall now cut into the *Amsterdam* cheese," de Treville stated.

I heard a suppressed cry from the woman… and then the whole of my attention became transferred to that taking place on the dinner wagon.

As the knife penetrated the cheese, it obviously met with much obstruction; but Trevvy persevered and cut the thing open. A great part of the cheese had been hollowed out in some way, and in this hollow lay a number of neatly wrapped packages!

Anne Hoskinson stood over by the door, her face pale, her dark eyes widely open—as, one after another, de Treville unwrapped the little packages, until presently on the white cover there rested several thousand pounds' worth of *diamonds!*

"Your friend, the 'electrician,' " said Trevvy, "successfully got away with the first consignment, but I fear that the second will have to be handed over to the proper authority."

"What are you going to do about *me?"* Anne asked quietly. A second time she had recovered her composure, and her little chin was firmly set.

"As I am in no way associated with the United States Customs authorities," de Treville replied, "the matter does not, I believe, enter into my province. No doubt I shall be called upon to answer certain questions—"

Using his monocle as a magnifying glass, he studied several diamonds. "If the first consignment resembled the second," he murmured, "your business must be quite successful."

He rang a bell—and Perigal reopened the lobby door and appeared.

De Treville turned to Miss Hoskinson. "You have," he said, "an hour in which to make yourself scarce—if that is possible, the vigilance of the Customs authorities being what it is." He turned to Perigal. "Miss Hoskinson is leaving, Perigal."

Perigal bowed, stood aside… and the long-awaited Anne went out.

I said nothing for a few moments. Standing up, I stared dazedly at the glittering exhibits upon the dinner wagon. "Of all the extraordinary schemes," I muttered, "this is the maddest of which I ever heard."

"Not so mad," Trevvy returned, fingering a particularly fine stone. "Ingenious, but perfectly sane."

"Its sanity is not apparent to me. How did she expect to get away with it?"

"The man, you see—the 'electrician'—blundered, or thought he

had. If he had succeeded, we should never have seen Anne! We must make inquiries about him. I cannot understand how he gained admittance—unless purely on the strength of his company electric cap! His job, of course, was to remove the consignments of diamonds and replace them with ordinary Dutch cheeses. Anne, greatly daring—possibly she is the head of the smuggling organization—came along to make quite sure that the man had not accidentally taken away the *real* cheese which he had brought with him to replace the first consignment. That woman has nerve!"

"But, Trevvy, who selected you for this extraordinary device?"

"Very simple…. The newspaper paragraph when I arrived! It was wired to Holland. You see, owing to the nature of my job, my mail is immune from Customs examination!"

The Panama Plot, Part One

Is the Panama Canal already marked for destruction? Does fiction ever point toward fact?…

"USELESS to disguise the fact," said de Treville; "beauty is a magnet."

I started guiltily. I must confess I had been watching the girl with the bronze hair almost from the moment that she had stepped out onto the floor. And evidently my expression mirrors my feelings to an undiplomatic degree—for I had been frowning at her partner.

There was breed about the red-haired girl; in her dress, in her carriage. But the man with whom she was dancing happened to belong to a type which has always excited my insular prejudice—a very dark fellow who danced too well. His coat fitted a shade closer to his waist and its tails were a fraction longer than my own tailor would have approved. His hair, again, was too glossy, and I disliked the low points onto the cheekbones.

"Sorry," I said. "Yes, the girl is charming. But the man—"

"Except in this case of a butler," Trevvy murmured, using his monocle as a quizzing glass, "I confess that I never cared for that style of hairdressing. However," he added, "one never knows. He may be a model citizen who supports an invalid mother and the girl may be a female blackguard. Life is so odd."

Life indeed was odd—certainly at the moment. At a time when I had expected to be back in London, and had cabled from New York to that effect, I found myself of all places in Cristobal. Trevvy had decided, only a few hours before sailing, that, being in the American Continent, he must not leave it without seeing the Panama Canal.

I had long ago concluded that de Treville's unexpectedness constituted his outstanding charm. But exactly why we should spend our first evening in this artificial dance restaurant was not clear to me. I had mentioned this earlier, and Trevvy had replied:

"I have never seen a Central American cabaret." An insatiable playgoer, he apparently regarded this explanation as sufficient.

"I note," he said, dropping his monocle upon its silken cord and turning to me, "that the lady of the titian locks frequently glances in our direction."

"She is unhappy," I replied. "I don't think she's a hostess or anything of that kind, but I do think she is anxious to get rid of her partner."

"H'm—one doesn't look for the unusual or the romantic in a place so blatantly designed to supply them—but of course there are always possibilities. I remember making the acquaintance of an American bishop in the Folies Bergères."

The place certainly was blatant. It was decorated to represent a jungle. But the decorator's conception of a jungle differed from mine.

The pictured inhabitants, furred, feathered and human, belonged rather to nightmare than to nature. The patrons, as I saw them in dim lighting, conformed much more closely to my idea of jungle life, except that they lacked tails.

When the dance finished I met an unmistakable glance of appeal from the red-haired girl. There was a vacant table adjoining our own, and to this she almost dragged her partner. I think he had detected one of her glances in our direction and would have preferred another seat, but she prevailed; and as lights were lowered for an item in the much advertised floor show, the pair settled down near to us.

A platoon of glamour which had cost the management nothing in dress bills, marched on. A soubrette sang a song having very bad words but quite a good tune, which the dancers supported with graceful movements presumably designed to reproduce those of a dying cuttlefish. When, finding myself yawning, I lay in my chair, I realized that willy-nilly I could not fail to overhear the conversation of our neighbors—the girl seemed anxious.

"I simply must get back, Val," the girl said. "Mother will be in bed, but Senior sometimes stays up late and he'll be furious. Yes, I'll wait till the end of this act, but then I must go."

"Why hurry?" Val replied. "This place goes on until daylight and we can get breakfast here."

"I am tired and I must go."

"But you don't even know the way!"

"A taxi driver can find it if you don't want to drive me."

"Taxi drivers in this town are not to be trusted. Teddy Coburn's daughter would fetch a big ransom…."

Only by the slightest inclination of the head in my direction did I recognize the fact that Trevvy, also, could overhear this conversation. The noise of the finale of the number drowned the rest of it, but when the floor was clear, and lights went up again for dancing:

"Oblige me," Trevvy whispered, "by drawing this blighter into conversation—if you can."

He stood up, moved across, and bowed to the pair at the next table. His bow belongs to Regency days. "My dear Miss Coburn," he said, "I am delighted that you recognized me. Your father will be glad I have found you. I am Major de Treville. May I have the pleasure of this dance?"

The girl was on her feet in a trice, her eagerness undisguised. My astonishment was unbounded; for Trevvy is not a dancing man. However, as they went off, recalling his instructions, I turned to my neighbor.

His features were unpleasantly disturbed. He had stood up as the girl left the table, and now, hands thrust in trouser pockets, he was

staring after the dancers as they moved around the floor, with an expression in his dark eyes not far short of murderous.

I found myself unable for some time to attract his attention; but finally:

"We seem to be odd men out," I remarked. "Won't you have a cigarette?"

"Thank you—*no!"*

He favored me with a glance as he spoke the words which Trevvy would have described as septic. But although in a way he deserved some sympathy, those fragments of conversation which I had overheard, the possessive arrogance of his manner, had disposed me to regard him as a very bad bounder.

So that when, pulling out his own case, he proceeded to select and light a cigarette without again glancing in my direction, the last shadow of sympathy disappeared. His gaze never left the dancers; and in consequence he failed to notice the fact that a slip of paper had fallen from the case as, viciously, he had snatched a cigarette. It lay now close to my feet.

Pointedly turning his back upon me, he dropped into his chair, still watching de Treville and his graceful partner. Then, springing up again, he treated me to a homicidal glare, and walking around behind the tables, disappeared in the direction of the exit.

I considered the ethics of the situation for some time before I decided to pick up the paper. It appeared to be a sheet torn out from a small notebook, and the large, plain, pencilled writing which it contained was so curiously legible that I could not fail to read it.

Penetration of area over eighty feet remains twelve feet deep. No progress since last report. Fresh supplies *must* be received immediately. —C.C.

When presently de Treville and the girl returned, I learned that she was called Paddy. She had a fresh ingenuousness so rarely met with nowadays that I was not surprised to find that she passed a great part of her time in her parents' country home—"the backwoods" as she termed it—and knew comparatively little of town life. She had spent one glorious season in London.

Trevvy had made the situation clear during the dance, but Paddy's unspoiled instinct seemed to tell her that she was in safe hands, and she began to talk to us with disarming intimacy.

"Mother and I worked hard," she confided, "to get Senior (that's what we call Father) to come down here. You see, Garry plans for us to be married next Spring when he gets his long vacation. I mean Garry Neal—" she turned to me: "You haven't heard of him before! He's an Air Corps officer stationed at France Field, on Zone patrol duty."

Trevvy began to fill her wine glass from a fresh bottle which a watchful waiter had brought, but: “Thanks, no!” She stretched a slim, sunburned hand over the glass. “I have had all that’s good for me, and I’m going straight home. Valentine Oslo has been busy with the bubbly all night.”

“Yes, I was going to inquire about Valentine,” Trevvy murmured. “He’s quite a new acquaintance, I gather?”

“Well—not so new as you! But I have only known him since we got to Cristobal. He’s not exactly a friend, but a sort of friend of Garry’s.”

“He lives here?”

“Just now he seems to be living here. He’s deeply interested in engineering. Of course, he’s quite intelligent and good-looking in his way! But I must say he’s been a pest! Senior thinks he has talent.”

“Your father is an engineer?”

“Why, yes! Didn’t you know? He’s Edward J. Coburn.” The information conveyed nothing to me, but Trevvy inclined his head in that gravely courteous manner which may or may not have meant that he was impressed. As a matter of fact I learned later that he had never heard of Edward J. Coburn.

“So they have much in common?”

“Quite a lot. But all things considered—particularly Senior—the way they keep from blows surprises me!”

She was infectiously gay. I forgot that she was so pretty and began to like Paddy Coburn for her sterling qualities.

“But Master Oslo is sometimes a bit of a nuisance?” Trevvy suggested.

“Not sometimes—all times. He has an idea that nobody should ever go home, and as I really don’t know Cristobal at all well, I was in rather a jam. You just chiselled in at the right moment. Valentine is crazy for Senior to get some sort of special permit to go up and explore the big lake tomorrow. He has arranged what sounds like a very attractive picnic, if the Canal people will give us leave to wander around.”

“The project sounds harmless enough,” I remarked, “and quite interesting.”

“Well,” cried Paddy, “do come!” She grasped us each by an arm, looking quickly from right to left. “Senior will be very, very glad to meet you. And I am sure if you would both come, everything could be arranged.”

And so presently, escorting the impulsive Paddy, whose hundred per cent vitality was stimulating, we returned to the hotel; for she was staying at the one which we ourselves had selected.

Mrs. Coburn had retired, but as I had heard Paddy assure Oslo, “Senior sometimes stayed up late,” Senior was up when we got in, and

I saw an expression not unlike gratitude cross his florid face when he recognized the fact that his daughter had returned in decent company.

Mr. Coburn had well-groomed gray hair, but observing his thick eyebrows, which had partially retained their original coloring, I could see that it was from her male parent that Paddy inherited her crowning glory.

"I was getting a little uneasy," he confessed. "If Garry had been on the party I shouldn't have worried. But Valentine Oslo is a new type to me, and I'm glad, Paddy, you have made some acquaintances of a kind I can more easily understand."

By this time my instinctive distrust of Valentine Oslo had developed into positive dislike, and I was itching to show de Treville the remarkable note which had fallen from his cigarette case. It suggested double dealing, a conspiracy of some kind. Mysterious to me, to Trevvy's peculiarly analytical brain it might convey a meaning. However, Mr. Coburn's hospitality would brook no refusal, and we presently found ourselves seated in the hotel lounge. I heard Trevvy and Mr. Coburn, after a little discussion, discovering some mutual London acquaintances.

It now became apparent that Paddy's anxiety had had no relation to the lateness of the hour, but had been dictated purely by a desire to escape from Oslo. She was as gay as a lark at early morning; and it was in fact already early morning.

Although obviously she would have preferred to talk to Trevvy rather than to me, my friend rather surprisingly engaged the engineer in a technical discussion regarding the Canal, and I found the charming Paddy on my hands; a light load, certainly, for her conversation was highly amusing.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Valentine Oslo looking around the lounge. Observing us: "Hello!" he exclaimed, "what happened? I lost you, Paddy."

"You mean *I* lost *you,"* she said.

"I dashed out to make a phone call. When I came back you had gone. I was disturbed."

"She was in good company," said Senior, glancing shrewdly at Oslo. "She got back early and she got back safe."

This faint discord disturbed our harmony for a moment, but it soon became resolved. Oslo ostentatiously drew a chair up beside Paddy and endeavored to monopolize her; but she insisted on including me in their conversation, and frequently glanced with growing despair in Trevvy's direction. He appeared to be entirely absorbed in technical details.

When I saw an Air Corps officer walking towards us, a good-looking young fellow, with tanned face, and wide-open frank blue

eyes, no introduction was needed: this was Garry. I was glad he had come, for Oslo's sneering animosity was beginning to get on my nerves.

Knowing de Treville, I began to wonder, granting that these were quite charming people, why he had not long since excused himself and retired. If he had known of the note which I had in my pocket, I might have understood. But I had had no opportunity to show it to him.

"Do you like Cristobal?" Paddy asked me suddenly.

"It reminds me of Port Said," I replied, glancing at Oslo; "it contains some very queer people—seems to attract them."

"It's not really a bad spot," said Neal, who had settled down beside me. "I hated it at first. It's tolerable after a time. In the hot weather it's not so good, but now that you are here, Paddy"— he reached across and slapped her shoulder boisterously —"it's as good as any place on earth."

He was obviously a four-square character. He was without guile; he saw the world through those wide-open blue eyes as a child unspoiled by reality; a sound lad and Paddy was his idol. I didn't blame him.

But his genial acceptance of Valentine Oslo as an all right acquaintance for her quite defeated me. I should have thought that even a child must have distrusted Valentine Oslo.

THE party broke up when Mr. Coburn rose. "I hope, gentlemen," he said, "that what Paddy tells me is true and that you will all be joining the excursion tomorrow. I can fix things up with Symington and arrange to have a launch meet us. Mr. Oslo has volunteered to look after the catering—which is kind of him—so that I suggest we assemble here around ten o'clock. And now I am going to bed."

As Trevvy and I moved away, I extracted the slip of paper from my pocket.

"Oslo dropped this from his cigarette case tonight," I said, "but he doesn't seem to have missed it. If he had been less pointedly offensive I should have returned it before. It means nothing to me, but nevertheless it's oddly suggestive."

Trevvy stood by a lighted glass window exhibiting expensive lacquer ware and other Oriental produce and, fixing his monocle, read the note in silence. Having done so, he glanced over his shoulder. Mr. Coburn had disappeared. Oslo and Garry Neal were standing talking to Paddy.

"It comes my way again!" Trevvy exclaimed in a low voice. "I am still the Crime Magnet! I have been angling all night for the link which I knew was there."

"It's Oslo's property. I suppose I have acted pretty badly in retaining it. What shall I do now?"

"Leave it to me."

We strolled back towards the seats which we had recently left. Seeing us return, Paddy made a move to rejoin us. And as we all settled down again around the small table, Trevvy took up a box of cigarettes which Mr. Coburn had placed there for everybody's use, raised the lid, and gave an impatient exclamation. As a matter of fact I could have told him that it was empty, and my hand dived for my case —but he was staring up appealingly at Oslo.

Very ungraciously, Oslo produced his case, opened and extended it.

"Thanks," said Trevvy, "it's thoughtful of you; but I see they are Cuban."

"Sorry, all I have!"

Oslo stared in a questioning way at the open case in his hand, and then, closing it, felt in his inside pocket. A curious expression crossed his dark face. Doubt was there. He glanced apprehensively at all of us.

As Trevvy ordered relays of drinks I saw Oslo staring around under the table and under the chairs; then: "If you will please excuse me," he said, "there is something quite urgent which I had forgotten." Whereupon he hurried out of the lounge.

So far the purpose of Trevvy's maneuver was clear enough. He had drawn Oslo's attention to his loss, and Oslo's manner had shown that it was one of importance. I could not doubt that he had returned to the restaurant at which we had met him. The next move in the game was not clear.

I suspected that the cryptical words concealed something of a criminal nature—possibly something into which the police might feel called upon to inquire; for the message itself was one easily memorized. However, Garry Neal leaving shortly afterwards (he was on duty in a few hours) Paddy, with obvious reluctance, said good night and retired to her room.

"Now," murmured Trevvy, "it is about time for Master Oslo's return."

He placed the note on the floor just under the chair upon which Oslo had been seated. Then, taking my arm, he led me off in the direction of the night porter's desk—an oasis of light in the desert of the darkened lobby.

We were anxious to learn how long it took to reach Gatun, times of trains, and other details on which I knew him already to be well informed. We studied a number of pamphlets to which the night porter drew our attention—but I could see Trevvy casting side glances now and again in the direction of that circle of chairs surrounding the small table. Presently I heard swing doors rapidly revolving, and then I saw Valentine Oslo hurry in.

His movements indicated agitation. He went straight across to the table, and dropping on his knees began to peer under it and under all

the chairs. Then he sprang upright… he had got the note. I saw him going upstairs.

"Very interesting," de Treville murmured. *"No* progress since last report is particularly significant."

"I RATHER anticipate," I said to Trevvy in the morning, "that we shall be unpopular with Oslo today."

He adjusted his monocle and stared at me in an abstracted manner. "And I rather anticipate," he replied, "that we shall be even more so tomorrow."

"He's probably an outsider," I agreed, for I had not fully appreciated the meaning of his words; "but after all, Garry Neal is no baby, and you must confess, Trevvy, that Paddy is well able to take care of herself."

"This is not the aspect of the problem which intrigues me. Although naturally Oslo finds Paddy attractive (she is remarkably pretty and amusing, and apparently Edward J. Coburn is a millionaire), Oslo has some other purpose. This accomplished, no doubt he intends to devote the whole of his attention to Paddy."

We were standing on the steps of the hotel. Away to our left I could see Mr. and Mrs. Coburn in rocking chairs, he reading a newspaper and she a magazine. She was a charming woman, surprisingly young-looking to be the mother of a grown-up son and daughter. She had an air of quiet composure totally different from the restless animation of the girl. This, I think, Paddy inherited from her father; for even as I watched him, he slapped the paper with his hand, removed his glasses, and turning to his wife began to speak with great animation, no doubt in criticism of something he had read.

"One must admit," Trevvy remarked, "that he is a capable organizer."

Following the direction of his glance, I saw Oslo supervising the loading of a commodious car which had been placed at Mr. Coburn's disposal for the day's expedition. Under his directions two hall porters were embarking a pair of hefty luncheon hampers.

"Be careful," Oslo snapped as they tipped one of the hampers on end. "There is wine in there, packed in ice."

Whatever was in there, beyond doubt the hamper was a heavy one.

"This promises to be less a picnic," said de Treville, "than a banquet."

Paddy appeared at this moment, a radiant vision in a backless outfit. Her smooth shoulders and arms were agreeably tanned and she wore a big flop sun hat. She danced up to Trevvy. "Oh, Major, isn't this weather marvelous! It's good to be alive!"

Trevvy, an arresting figure in a faultless cream suit, appraised her in his frank way. "Few men looking at you would deny that, my dear."

She laughed gaily, waved her hand at Oslo and turning, hurried along the terrace to where her parents were seated. Oslo, apparently satisfied that the solid and liquid cargoes were safely disposed, strolled up the steps.

"I expect the drive will be a fairly hot one," he said, revealing no trace of his old animosity in his manner. "But it will be cooler on the lake. Mr. Coburn has arranged for a launch, I am told. Seen Gatun Lake?"

"No," Trevvy replied. "It has remarkable features, I believe?"

"Yes, the dead trees. A place to set one thinking of goblins. Certainly something to see while you are here."

He was dressed nearly as well as de Treville, white linen lending a distinction to his glossy dark personality which he lacked in evening kit. I mean he looked less like a gigolo.

Oslo driving, when presently we set out, Paddy beside the driver and Trevvy and I behind with Mr. and Mrs. Coburn, I wondered what it was all about; what Trevvy had read into that strange message?

A superimposed civilization left behind us, with its oil tanks and water works, our road led us straight into the jungle. Peering through dense shadows of tropical foliage, I thought of Morgan and his march on Panama; and the asphalt surface, the car, seemed grotesquely out of place.

Paddy turned around and, resting a sunbrowned elbow on the ledge, said, "There are alligators in those pools, and most wonderful birds in the jungle. The insects are wonderful too, but not so nice to know."

Her words, her laughing face, snatched me back to the twentieth century. Staunch believer though I am in the Buddhistic faith of reincarnation, I found myself unable to imagine Paddy in any period but that in which she lived. De Treville obviously belonged to the days of Henry Morgan—but she was newly born, I thought.

"This is Alligator Creek," said Oslo.

His words brought my mind precipitately back to the present. I was unable to imagine Oslo in any age which did not possess night clubs.

In the mirror of the water, palms were reproduced magically. Festoons of flowering vines embraced the trees. Yet it was difficult to realize that twenty paces left or right of that well-kept road lay primeval jungle—places unexplored, where orchids, beasts, birds and insects, many of them not yet classified, lived undisturbed by human intrusion.

This idea fascinated me.

Man, ever daring, defying the dispensations of Mother Nature and cutting a waterway through a neck of land which the gods of old had ordained should be rock and creek and jungle—what subtle enemies

might be lurking there in hiding, watching and waiting until their hour should come! When we arrived at the big fort and barracks, I vaguely wondered what the place was like at night where man had so brazenly defied natural laws as to link two oceans of dissimilar levels.

We began to climb up blazing red hills splashed with the violent green of tropic vegetation, until, arriving at Gatun, we were met by Mr. Symington, of the Canal staff.

"It appears," said Trevvy, with a cryptic stare, "that we are privileged to enter areas ordinarily prohibited. This explains one minor mystery."

"Indeed. What minor mystery?"

"The mystery of Oslo's anxiety to enlist Mr. Coburn for the expedition. Because anybody can go out on the lake and also inspect the locks…."

A shallow draught motor craft, normally employed, I understood, by an inspector of the Hyacinth Patrol, was placed at our disposal by the hospitable Mr. Symington. It was quite commodious and fitted with an awning to protect us from the sun. From the office window I watched the loading of the launch, carried out under Oslo's direction. Paddy had monopolized de Treville, and now, "What is a hyacinth patrol?" she asked. "It sounds like a piece of music from a film by Walt Disney!"

"I had already inquired," Trevvy replied. "It is a fleet of trawlers used to clear the lake of wild water flowers—part of the ceaseless battle of man against nature…."

"Put that hamper right aft, there," I heard Oslo call. "Go easy! go easy!"

His care of our comfort, I reflected, perhaps betrayed the existence of a decent streak in the man. When he came up from the landing stage to the office, "Beer and Hock," he said, "are in the other hamper, as well as our luncheon, and that is carefully packed, too. But all champagne is in the traveling icebox." He smiled. "Of this I have to be careful."

At odd times his accent and phraseology set me wondering about Valentine Oslo's nationality. However, we were ready to set out, and all made our way on board. Just as the launch was about to start, Paddy discovered that she had left her handbag behind, probably in Mr. Symington's office.

Instantly Valentine Oslo volunteered, sprang ashore and walked back. I saw Trevvy, monocle in eye, watching the retreating white clad figure. He turned to me:

"I have just realized, Digger," he said carelessly, "that I also have left something behind—my cigarette case; let us stroll back."

I readily agreed. Paddy, the restless, was taking a photograph of

her parents. As we walked up the well-kept road from the landing stage, Trevvy spoke never another word. We were nearing the office building when I saw Valentine Oslo. He was standing ten paces from the door, talking to a sallow-faced truck driver.

Paddy's bag was under his arm.

He stared and broke off the conversation—and the truck driver hurried back to a lorry which I saw standing out on the road.

"Hello!" exclaimed Oslo; but I detected an expression of confusion—a return of that old hostility.

"I have been absent-minded also," said de Treville easily; "my cigarette case is on Mr. Symington's desk."

We walked past Oslo and into the office—and there was Trevvy's case on the desk. He picked it up and stared at me oddly. "No doubt you are asking yourself a question," he murmured. "Why I left my cigarette case here?"

"Did you do so deliberately?"

"Certainly."

"What on earth for?"

He stared from the window after the retreating figure of Oslo. "Because I happened to see Oslo hide Paddy's bag in that cupboard over there, and then rush her down to the launch so that she should not miss the bag until she found herself on board. Undoubtedly! He wanted an excuse to return alone. I wanted an excuse to follow him!"

"And why did he return?"

"To give some message to that Asiatic truck driver…. Now what can that message have been?"

The Panama Plot, Part Two

Who was Oslo? Did his game threaten the Canal? Was the American girl a pawn?

"WHEN I was Paddy's age," said Mrs. Coburn, "if my mother had caught me with a man's arm around me in public (even Edward's) she would not have hesitated to slap my face. I sometimes wonder if parents today are too lax. What do *you* think?"

It was something of a poser. Oslo was seated on a cushion in the bows beside Paddy, one arm around her shoulders. Trevvy, in the starboard corner, faced them. The little launch was speeding towards a strange tropical island upon which we had been told a great variety of the birds and animals of the Canal Zone might be seen in their native state.

I saw a rapt look in Paddy's eyes whenever de Treville spoke, a look which I had come to recognize as a danger signal. That Trevvy was merely being courteous I knew well enough, but did Oslo know? That sneering expression which made me want to hit him had returned again to his face.

"Of course she is very attractive," I remarked aimlessly, "and no doubt is just feeling her oats."

"But she is engaged to Garry Neal! Suppose you were in Garry's place—would you be entirely satisfied with Paddy's behavior?"

"Garry belongs to a school, Mrs. Coburn, which I don't profess to understand. But they seem to understand one another. My friend, de Treville, however, rather shares your own views."

"Your friend de Treville is a dangerously charming person."

"He is in favor of the face-slapping method—but he thinks it is Valentine Oslo who should be slapped," I said, as Trevvy, following some remark by Oslo which I could not hear, smiled slightly and stood up.

He came back and joined us. Paddy's glance followed him. Mr. Coburn was lying on a pile of cushions staring up at the awning. He was evidently a man who could enjoy today without bothering about the possible problems of tomorrow.

"I confess to an uncommon thirst," said Trevvy, dropping down beside me. "Don't you feel, Mr. Coburn, that one of the bottles of vintage off the ice of which we have heard would be acceptable?"

This suggestion, coming from a man of de Treville's punctilious manners, took me completely by surprise. I stared hard at him, but: "I agree," drawled Coburn, smiling at my friend.

"No, no!" Oslo, from the other end of the launch, spoke sharply, removed his arm from Paddy's shoulders, and stood up. "As master of ceremonies I protest! There is beer in the other hamper. Champagne follows later!"

He came forward to where we sat and opened the luncheon basket. From it he took out a number of thermos flasks containing iced lager. “Quite acceptable,” Trevvy murmured, lighting a cigarette and glancing up lazily at Oslo.

Over his shoulder, as he removed stoppers: “Want a drink, Paddy?” Oslo called.

“Coming!” cried Paddy—and in a moment was beside Trevvy, her arm linked in his.

The look in Oslo’s eyes confirmed my opinion. He was a man I could never like. Trevvy’s face had become quite expressionless. I was to recall this small incident before many hours had passed.

“You see,” Mr. Coburn said, as we stared into a dense jungle beside which the launch lay, “when the dam was made, so Symington explained, forests, farms and whole villages were submerged. They lie deep under us right now. Hill tops such as this have become densely populated islands, because all the animal and bird life retreated to them.”

“Just wonderful!” Paddy murmured, and I noted that she was staring at Trevvy.

Amongst the densely ranked tropical trees I saw the poisonous colors of orchids, tangles of flowering vines; and there were great ferns overhanging the water, from which kingfishers, a darker green than the foliage, darted in their quest of prey. Parakeets screeched, and in the shallows was a pelican.

“Can’t we go ashore?” Paddy cried.

“I think not,” said her father. “There are snakes in there, and insects, which are worse.”

“Yes,” said Oslo, and turned his ardent dark eyes upon Paddy. “But all life is wonderful and very beautiful if one knows how to enjoy it.”

He suddenly sprang ashore and advanced into this magical island brought into existence by the handiwork of man, thrusting branches aside and uttering the loud Australian *Coo-ee!*

The result was dramatic. Crashes came from distant thickets as invisible wild things fled before the steps of the intruder. Birds of all kinds took to their wings, so that a multi-colored cloud formed over our heads for a moment.

“Come out!” screamed Paddy, “come out! A snake will bite you!”

“I don’t bother so much about snakes,” said Mr. Coburn, “but even here on the lake there are more mosquitoes than I care for, not to mention sundry flies of doubtful appearance.”

“I don’t like it,” Mrs. Coburn declared, “I don’t like it at all! Oh, look! What was that horrid thing?”

Something streaked through dense shadows, not far ahead of Oslo. “Unless I am greatly mistaken,” Trevvy murmured, “a jaguar!”

Presently, to Mrs. Coburn's obvious relief, we pushed off and headed back for some spot selected by Oslo for luncheon purposes.

"I am told," said Mr. Coburn, "that there is only one man who really knows half the truth about the fauna of the Canal Zone."

"I should like to meet him," Trevvy declared.

"You mean Dr. Garcia, no doubt," said Oslo.

"That's the fellow I was thinking about. According to Symington, Dr. Garcia, who has published several books on the subject, has a private collection over by Panama which, although small, is as well worth a visit as any of the big Zoos."

"That would be fun to see!" Paddy exclaimed. She treated Trevvy to the gayest of her smiles. "Let's go there tomorrow. What do you say, Major?"

"I should be delighted to make the acquaintance of Dr. Garcia."

"I regret I cannot go," said Oslo. "Dr. Garcia is an interesting character, no doubt; but I should not like to believe in some of his theories."

"To which of his theories do you particularly refer?" De Treville studied Oslo through upraised monocle rather as though he was one of Dr. Garcia's specimens.

"Well," Oslo replied, steadily watching Paddy, "he thinks that this Isthmus which he always calls The Isthmus of Darien, was at some time a sort of starting point of the group of islands which led to Atlantis. He is crazy, of course, but I admit he is interesting to talk to."

"That theory is not so crazy."

"Ah! but he has others! He says that any attempt by man to upset the balance of nature can never succeed. Atlantis, according to Dr. Garcia, was destroyed by some too ambitious experiment of the Atlanteans. He says that the Panama Canal is another such experiment, and he thinks that the forces of nature will readjust this linking of two oceans."

"If he is right," Trevvy said, and glancing swiftly at me, "there are nations, no doubt, who would be happy to subsidize nature."

Across the goblin lake, far from that steam lane along which ocean-going liners make their way from Atlantic to Pacific, we speeded. Phantom trees, tops of woodland monarchs submerged, surrounded us. I was reminded of the Forest of Fear in Walt Disney's picture. What this place was like at night I found myself unable to imagine.

Some of these monsters of a world destroyed were seeking to renew life, sending out questioning shoots, but the greater number were grayly dead. Upon many, parasitic plants battened, from amid which birds rose out of their nests as we wound tortuously among the tree tops of a forest undespoiled before American engineers created Lake Gatun.

The upper air hummed with planes. The vigilance of the Air Patrol was unceasing.

"Do you know," said Mr. Coburn, lighting a cigar, "this place gives me the fantods. The conquests of man are all very well, but there's something sad about it."

"The sad thing about human conquests—" Trevvy began—

"Is that it is never real," Oslo interrupted.

Trevvy stared rather grimly for a moment. "You anticipate me."

Valentine Oslo was back in his old place; arm around Paddy; and his rather brazen air of all-conquering male became disturbed only when he found how frequently Paddy's gaze was set upon de Treville. Mrs. Coburn exchanged a portentous glance with me and shook her head. Mr. Coburn smoked and lounged.

In fact nothing awakened me to the vast issues at stake throughout the whole of that momentous day. Not because nothing occurred—but because I was blind to the significance of plain facts.

Do not suppose that I had forgotten the cryptic message signed "C.C." which had been dropped by Oslo, and the loss of which had so palpably disturbed him; that I had overlooked the trick with Paddy's bag to enable him to talk privately with the yellow skinned truck driver. What I mean is that the connecting link eluded me and minor episodes escaped me.

I suppose Paddy's growing infatuation for de Treville distracted my mind from the real issue. Making my way forward during an interval when Paddy had joined her mother and father and Oslo had followed her, I said: "This is all very unusual, Trevvy—weirdly interesting. But knowing your habits, I still can't make out why you came."

He raised his monocle in a reproving fashion, surveyed me for a few moments in silence and then: "Really, Digger," he said, and the reproach was conveyed in his tone also, "don't tell me you are bored!"

"Bored? Certainly not."

"Then why ask so unnecessary a question? Surely throughout our friendship my efforts have been constantly directed towards saving you from that unhappy boredom to which you are subject."

His smile told me that the words meant nothing, except that he was pulling my leg. But I had the satisfaction of knowing that the next odd occurrence of the day proved quite as surprising to Trevvy as to me. What happened was this:

The authority of Mr. Symington having given us entire freedom of movement, we suddenly found ourselves, in our shallow craft which had a high turn of speed, near that green and curving hill—resembling the bank of a bunker on a giant's golf course—which is the Great Gatun Dam.

"I always think," said Valentine Oslo, giving a signal to check the

engine, “that here is the most thrilling point on the lake.”

“Why?” Trevvy inquired.

“Because here nature is defied, by the work of engineers. A hundred miles of water held back by this green prison! Think of it—” he stood up and extended his arms—“held back by this colossal wall. Can you imagine where we would be if the colossus failed us!”

It was a disconcerting thought. We lay close in to the side of the dam, even at its crest a hundred feet across, but, as Oslo had reminded us, not a thing of nature, but the handiwork of man.

“Here,” he went on, “it would be good to lunch.”

Trevvy was watching him in an odd way.

“It doesn’t look exactly a romantic spot,” Paddy commented.

“I don’t think I’d care about the way it looked,” said her mother, “if someone would give me a wing of chicken and a glass of wine!”

“Hear, hear!” growled Mr. Coburn.

Oslo nodded, smiled and went off to where the champagne hamper lay upon a cushion.

“Lend a hand, Paddy!” he called.

Paddy, with a final glance at Trevvy, ran to join him. In her bronzed, youthful beauty, she was a delightful picture.

Just how it happened I don’t know even at the present moment. I saw the pair raise the obviously heavy basket, and I saw Trevvy raise his monocle. Then Oslo stumbled, slipped, extended one arm to prevent Paddy from falling into the lake… and the hamper was gone!

A groan came from Mr. Coburn.

“Good gracious!” his wife exclaimed. “Paddy!”

Oslo stared over the side. We all stared over the side. Ever increasing rings showed where the basket had sunk in those deep waters….

“Val!” Paddy snapped, and glared at him in sudden anger, “you nearly threw me overboard! Never mind the hamper. You acted like a clumsy fool!”

“These things will occur in the best ordered launch parties,” said Trevvy quietly. “I believe there is still some beer left in the other basket, and surely I heard mention of hock?”

“I don’t want to lunch out here at all!” said Paddy angrily. “Let’s go ashore and lunch. This is a crazy place to pick!”

“Paddy!” her mother’s tone was sternly reproving—“when one has been clumsy it is useless to become ill-tempered about it!”

“Oh, for pity’s sake,” growled Mr. Coburn, “let’s go ashore!”

When, back in the hotel that night, I had dressed and came downstairs, I found Trevvy seated in the cocktail bar. He was deeply immersed in a book.

“Hello!” I said, “what’s interesting you?”

He dropped his monocle which he always used for reading and glanced up.

"Mr. Coburn has kindly lent me a rather heavily technical work upon the Panama Canal," he replied, "and I have been endeavoring to correct my ignorance."

"Are you particularly interested in the Panama Canal?"

"I begin to believe, Digger, that it is of some slight importance."

I had just ordered another of his favorite cocktails and a drink for myself when Paddy, brown as a gipsy and lovely in a simple dinner frock, came running into the bar, looking right and left, obviously for Trevvy. "You Englishmen dress quicker than anyone I ever knew," she remarked. "Why, you haven't been gone ten minutes!"

"Seven are sufficient," Trevvy declared in the solemn manner which he employed when most facetious, "including a bath."

"Not seven minutes when you haven't got a man with you?" Paddy challenged.

"Six, if I had my man, Perigal," he conceded.

"I think you Guardsmen just love the Guards!" said Paddy with her most enchanting smile, as she sipped a drink which I had ordered for her; "your routines and your correct manners, and everything."

She was only playing, but Trevvy has chinks in his armor, even as you and I. He did not return her smile for a moment.

"I hope, Paddy," he replied, "that the Guards, if unfortunately their hour should come again, will show themselves to be something which a man might reasonably love."

There was something grave, almost ominous, in his words, and Paddy became serious. She watched him anxiously—I believe she thought she had offended him. But before I had invented an appropriate remark, Garry Neal came breezing in.

"Hello, there!" he cried, "one more good night begins!"

When Mr. and Mrs. Coburn joined us, Oslo was with them. It would be untrue to say that the dinner party which followed was entirely a happy one. Valentine Oslo's attitude towards Garry Neal was almost that of open contempt; but for de Treville he exhibited a thinly veiled enmity.

Towards the end of dinner: "I have been studying your friend very closely," said Mrs. Coburn, "and although he is dangerously good-looking, I recognize that he is that rarest of creatures, a gentleman. For a mother it is a dreadful confession to make, but undoubtedly Paddy is the attacking party." Queer how women watch women for danger signals; she was not concerned about Oslo.

"You may forget the matter, Mrs. Coburn. You know your daughter, and I think I know her, now; in her heart she is proud of Garry. This is just her way of showing him that he has won someone

worth while."

I was glad when dinner was over. Mrs. Coburn was tired, and indeed, it had been an exacting day. But from the point of view of Garry Neal, newly off duty, the night was young, the fun was just commencing. "Come on!" said he—he had joined de Treville and myself in the cocktail bar. "Let's go and dance. You have no partners, so I'll hire out Paddy. Every man that dances with her has to pay drinks all round."

We went into the room where the band was playing and all pulled up in the doorway. Paddy and Oslo were dancing cheek to cheek.

"That bird's ahead of the whole party!" Garry said in a low voice. "I begin not to like him."

"I have only one suggestion to make," said Trevvy. "If, without interfering in any way with your duty, you could find an occasion to throw Master Valentine Oslo into the Canal, I feel that a good deed would have been done."

Garry stared for a moment at Trevvy and then burst out laughing.

"Say, you don't mean that?" he exclaimed. "Valentine's a queer object, I admit, but you don't think there's any real harm in him?"

De Treville fixed his monocle in place and watched the pair slowly moving around the floor. "I was perhaps merely thinking of what I should do in your place," he remarked.

We were an ill-assorted party, four men and one girl, and I was thinking that the graceful thing would be for Trevvy and myself to withdraw, leaving Garry and Oslo to fight out the issue between them, when Trevvy made just the move that I was contemplating.

"Being unused to the Central American climate," he said, "I feel that bed is indicated." He turned to me: "Digger, are you of the same opinion?"

"Entirely."

Paddy held out her hand with an expression almost of despair. Trevvy raised it to his lips, and the gesture was one of such graceful dismissal as to be truly kingly. He nodded to Oslo, tapped Garry Neal on the shoulder, and taking my arm led me towards the bar. "I think a binder, Digger, and then to bed. There are several problems on which I must sleep."

I waved to our new friends and went out with de Treville, The bar was deserted. To the bartender: "A glass of beer," said Trevvy, "and then the blessing of sleep."

"More and more," I remarked, "I don't like Oslo."

"More and more you are right," Trevvy murmured.

The bartender set our beer before us.

"He hasn't the ghost of a chance," I added, "of coming between Paddy and Garry Neal, and her temporary infatuation for yourself—"

“Which is a matter of hours,” Trevvy interrupted, “and will pass like a morning breeze when we have pushed on, doesn’t count, as you say.”

I hadn’t had time to say it!

“No, the happiness of Paddy isn’t bothering me. The Coburns are charming people, and I am quite sincerely fond of Paddy; she is a really nice girl—full of all the delightful nonsense proper to her age. I am wondering about something else.”

“What are you wondering about?”

He sipped his beer and set the mug upon the counter.

“I am wondering,” he replied, lighting a cigarette, “why Valentine Oslo organized an elaborate picnic with no other object in view than that of dropping a basket into Lake Gatun….”

The Panama Plot, Part Three

And now Trevvy closes in on Oslo.

"DO you mind if I use your phone?" de Treville asked. "I have carelessly left that work on the Panama Canal down in the bar and I meant to finish reading it tonight."

"Go ahead."

When we had come upstairs Trevvy had followed me into my room, and I knew there was something he wanted to talk about. Now he took up the bedside telephone. I began hunting for a tin of cigarettes which I had packed somewhere amongst my baggage, and when presently I found it, I turned and stared at my friend, wondering if the line might be out of order—for he had not spoken a word.

"Trevvy—"

Receiver to ear, he raised his hand sharply, enjoining silence! I watched him, amazed. With his disengaged hand he twirled his monocle; his face was expressionless. Then, quietly, he replaced the instrument. "The little god of adventure has not deserted me," he remarked.

"I don't follow."

"The lines were crossed—not an uncommon thing in hotels. I have been listening to an informative conversation between Valentine Oslo and someone called Charley! These things are meant to be, Digger."

"What about the book?"

"I will mention it to the hall porter. There is more urgent business afoot."

"What do we do?"

"Remove dress clothes," Trevvy directed, "and get into some inconspicuous suit. I will retire to my room and do likewise."

"Then what happens?"

"I feel that those influences which constantly bring me into contact with strange crime have been at work ever since I arrived in Cristobal. Something which deeply touches you and me is going on here. Sleep is impossible. Let us investigate."

"What are we looking for?"

"Charley."

I undressed and put on a light lounge suit. Trevvy called for me just as I had completed the transformation, and we set out for an unknown destination. The restless spirit of Trevvy's Gascon ancestor was alive in him. Anything might happen on a night like this.

Trevvy's oldest lounge suit retained the distinction of Saville Row, and a soft-brimmed hat merely accentuated his resemblance to that M. de Treville who commanded the bodyguard of Louis XIII.

Our first visit was to a house of entertainment described as a Bar,

of which the chief attraction seemed to be an all-in wrestling match between two gigantic Negro women. The battle was greeted with roars of laughter from a mixed company amongst which I saw few white faces. As we went out, Trevvy turned to the doorkeeper. “Has Charley been in tonight?” he inquired.

The man stared stupidly.

“Don’t know who you mean, boss.”

We passed on.

Above us stretched the satin tent of a tropical night, torn in a million places where stars shone through. Trevvy paused, looking about him. “Countless comedies and tragedies are being enacted about us,” he declared, “but tonight we have one chief objective… Charley!”

“Surely it would save a lot of bother just to inquire at selected places. Why waste our time going in?”

“We also seek a truck driver.”

“A truck driver?”

“You remember him? The fellow to whom Master Oslo was talking at Gatun.”

“What leads you to suppose that we shall find him in any of these haunts?”

“The little god was kind to me tonight, Digger. The fragment of telephone conversation which I overheard led me to believe, in the first place, that the speaker known as Charley is an Asiatic. In the second place (you see, I had missed part) I gathered that an earlier conversation had been interrupted at Gatun—”

“I begin to understand.”

“Of course! This is where the truck driver comes in. Apart from the fact that Oslo was instructed to meet Charley at ‘the usual place’ immediately, I learned little more. As I don’t know one but do know the other, I am inquiring for Charley and looking out for the truck driver.”

“‘The usual place’ may not be one of the night haunts at which you have inquired, ‘Has Charley been in.’ It is probably an office or a private house.”

“My dear Digger!” Trevvy tapped me on the shoulder. “Why be so pessimistic? Oslo was told to wait ‘if the show is on’ (those were the words) or ‘the restaurant is crowded.’ ”

We were walking slowly along a street notable for a number of Chinese restaurants, Trevvy was glancing from side to side. Before an illuminated sign which said: “The Hundred Palm Shoots,” and which bore the same words in Chinese green lettering, he pulled up. “This looks promising,” he murmured softly.

We entered a sort of small café, on one side of which was a counter set out with Chinese delicacies. There was a center space. A number of

tables were half-hidden in alcoves. Few were occupied—it was getting late. I suspected that "the show" had recently finished, assuming this to be "the usual place." It was individualized by an odor of spice with which mingled Bombay duck.

A bead curtain hung in an opening at the further end. There was a lighted room beyond. Trevvy made for a table adjoining the opening and we sat down. A waiter—his face less expressive than a Benda mask—came to take our order.

Trevvy ordered tea. When it was brought on a lacquer tray, with the tiny, fragile cups: "Is Charley here tonight?" he inquired.

"Mr. Chee inside," the waiter answered.

As he vanished somewhere behind the counter, de Treville glanced at me. "Charley Chee," he murmured. "It would not be too fantastic to suspect Charley Chee of being the 'C.C.,' whose message to Oslo you found!"

I became conscious of growing excitement. Trevvy sipped his tea for awhile, seeming to be listening. A mutter of conversation was discernible beyond the bead curtain.

"Stand by, Digger."

Trevvy got up and looked through the curtain. I followed. None of the customers paid the slightest attention to our movements.

I saw a small room surrounded by divans. In a corner two men were seated in earnest conversation. One of these, who wore a smart lounge suit and who sat directly under a wall light, I instantly recognized as the truck driver of Gatun! The other, who was in evening clothes, moved slightly at this moment…. It was Valentine Oslo!

For a few seconds Trevvy watched, and then quietly returned to his chair.

"Dispose of the tea as quickly as possible," he said. "This is where we disappear."

As he paid the waiter, "You see Mr. Chee?" that individual chanted.

"Charley busy," Trevvy replied. "Come later."

The street gained, Trevvy said, "I am glad we came to Cristobal. A good look at Charley Chee has confirmed an earlier impression. I remember him by another name."

In spite of the hour which I had retired I was down early in the morning. I found Paddy in a rocking chair on the terrace sipping an iced drink through a straw.

"I never slept a wink," she declared. "I thought the cheery evening was going to finish up with a fight."

"Surely, as referee, the matter was in your hands?"

She stared at me oddly. "You are not going to be such a brute as to suggest that I ever aim to do anything else than try to get away from

Valentine Oslo?"

"When I saw you dancing you didn't seem to be trying to get away from him!"

"There was no one else to dance with, then."

I laughed and she joined me, squeezing my arm in her impulsive, friendly fashion.

"I suppose it seems fun sometimes," she confessed, "but other times I get frightened."

She was silent for a while. I offered her a cigarette but she shook her head. "Too many last night."

"What time did you finish up?"

"I suppose it was nearly three o'clock. Where did you two slink off to? You don't think I didn't hear you'd gone out?"

I stared at her in real surprise. "Paddy—you should have been a detective. We went out to look for someone."

"Look for someone?" Her delicate eyebrows were raised incredulously.

"Exactly. Someone de Treville was anxious to find."

She turned her head aside and became silent again; then, glancing at me sideways under her lashes, "Is major de Treville married?" she asked.

"No. He has never married."

"Really! How odd! I suppose it's a case of one of those hopeless affairs—it's a way they have in the Guards!"

"There's no hopeless affair, Paddy. Trevvy's heart is quite intact."

"I should judge," she said softly, "that it's likely to remain so."

This was highly puzzling. I thought hard, and then: "He has a rare quality of friendship for men and women alike," I replied. "Life interests him intensely. He finds an endless fascination in the problems which surround us all if we can only see them. He regards Garry as a hundred per cent man and soldier, and I assure you that he is a good judge of men and soldiers. He would do anything in his power to make you happy."

"You make him sound like a first-class prig," Paddy declared, staring at me somberly, "and I am sure he's not! But he is altogether too mysterious for my peace of mind."

"When I was in India," said Trevvy, smiling, "a Yogi told me that all women are alike, and assured me that until a man appreciated this fact, he had no hope of finding the path of truth… but there, I think, is our car."

It was a hired car, chauffeur-driven, the party consisting of de Treville, myself and Paddy. Mr. and Mrs. Coburn had other plans, Garry Neal was on duty, and I did not ask about Oslo.

Trevvy had been mysteriously invisible during the early hours of

the morning, but I happened to learn quite accidentally that he had been down to the headquarters of the Zone police. On the way along he communicated to us odd scraps of information about the great dam, having apparently been studying Mr. Coburn's book.

"Although the dam is half a mile wide at its base and four hundred feet at water level," he said, "the core is composed of sand and clay. The facing, only, is of rock." He adjusted his monocle and stared at me fixedly. "This point, I thought, was of some significance."

"Why?" I asked blankly.

"Yes, why?" echoed Paddy.

De Treville smiled and tucked her arm under his own: "Forgive me, Paddy. I was making the inexcusable blunder of talking shop!"

We heard no more of Gatun Dam; but that de Treville was preoccupied he could not wholly conceal. He seemed to be watching, speculating, summing everybody up—the driver of the car, the people we passed, and, later, travelers on the train.

That queer, incongruous train! How impudently it rattled through jungles and over swamps, past alligator haunted pools. The inevitable pause for drinks at a Panama Hotel was followed by the arrival of another car, arrangements for which had been made by the hospitable Canal authorities. I was beginning to realize that Edward J. Coburn was a highly respected figure in the engineering world.

As we set out to view the zoological treasures of Dr. Garcia, "It would be impossible, I believe," said Trevvy, staring out at the nondescript throngs in the streets, "to throw a stone in the Canal Zone without hitting a foreign agent."

Paddy glanced at him shrewdly, but—it was unlike her—made no comment.

There was nothing to indicate the existence of this unique private collection of living creatures of Central America, other than a sun-bleached wooden gate in a high wall. Here the car pulled up, and warned of our visit. The celebrated zoologist came out to meet us.

Dr. Garcia was of imposing presence, tall and of athletic build, silver hair brushed back from a fine forehead. He had a short mustache and imperial, penetrating blue eyes, and wore an open-neck shirt, riding breeches and gaiters.

"I am glad to know that my small reputation has made a visit worth while," he said.

He immediately proposed drinks in his bungalow, and we soon realized that we were in the company of a remarkable man. I was ashamed to confess that I had read none of the books which he had published on his subject.

"Nobody can go in for everything," he said in his deep voice, blue eyes twinkling good-humoredly.

He showed us rare and beautiful wildfowl, in roughly made enclosures. There were beasts in cages which did not look strong enough to contain them—pumas, and other graceful, dangerous members of the cat family, tortoises, monkeys—all brought in by the natives.

"Do you mean to say you live here amongst these things!" Paddy exclaimed.

"Surely, I live here," the doctor replied.

"I should never close my eyes!"

We came to the snake pit, where deadly things from the Zone jungles crawled about amongst little rock pools. The doctor climbed over the shiny wall and dropped amongst this fearsome family.

"Oh, no!" cried Paddy. "I can't bear it!"

But Dr. Garcia, grinning good-humoredly, grabbed and extended for our inspection a snake whose bite would have meant almost certain death. It was a rare specimen: there are few venomous reptiles in this area. Then—Paddy had to turn away—he captured a sinister, agile thing which was trying to climb the shiny wall, an enormous bird-catching spider; its body the size of a hen's egg, its legs resembling a man's fingers and entirely covered with black hair! This kicking monstrosity he held up for us to see.

Paddy was staring about her helplessly when the doctor rejoined us, climbing up out of the pit. "I have kept my star exhibit to the last," he said. "They don't seem so sensational as the cats, the snakes and the spiders, until their habits are pointed out; but in my experimental laboratory I have, and I say it with confidence, a number of the strangest insects that any man ever possessed."

As we walked towards a detached hut at the southern end of the property, passing enclosures in which all sorts of queer creatures were confined, "What I just can't get used to," said Paddy, "is that you live right here amongst them!"

"A man must live somewhere!" Dr. Garcia laughed; "where better than right next door to his hobby! Some people study the ways of humanity"—there was an ironic note in his deep voice—"seems to me there's so little to study. Common experience teaches us all there is to know. But these things"—he indicated his collection with a brown, muscular hand—"have a thousand secrets, and I have given up a lot of my life to trying to find them out."

He unlocked the door of his laboratory. It was a roughly built shed, with skylights. Trestles along the center supported a series of glass tanks. Peering in curiously through the glass, I saw at first nothing but rocks and water. Then I recognized the fact that darting in and out the crevices of the rock were multitudes of tiny insects.

Dr. Garcia relighted his pipe, thrust his hands into his pockets, and

stood grinning from face to face.

"Nothing much to look at!" he commented.

"In what way, Doctor Garcia," de Treville asked, peering closely into a tank through his monocle, "are these creatures unusual?"

"Well"— Dr. Garcia crossed the laboratory—"this panel, here, magnifies pretty considerably. Just have a look at them through it."

We all joined him. Enlarged in this way, I saw tiny creatures which bore some resemblance to white ants. There were hosts of them and I discovered something vaguely disturbing in their ceaseless activity.

"There appears to be a sort of curtain," Trevvy murmured, "almost like a phantom glass tank, standing there by that central mound."

Dr. Garcia laughed rather gruffly.

"The phantom tank is right. That was just an ordinary glass case in which I put my first specimens. You notice the gaps? It looks like lace. That's because they burrowed right through it."

"Through glass?" Paddy exclaimed. "You don't mean they burrow through *glass?"*

"Absolutely. They thrive on it. They are, I am proud to say, a hybrid product of my own laboratory. They are a sort of aquatic termite; they can burrow into almost anything. The parent stock occurs in only one spot in the Isthmus—a rocky pool near the old Darien Pass. I have succeeded in crossing them with another aquatic burrower of even more destructive habits—and you see the result!"

His deep voice grew deeper; he spoke with the enthusiasm of the specialist.

"One can watch three generations come and go in as many hours. They are prolific as sand shrimps. Fortunately, there are several species of fish which prey upon them. In those tanks at the end, there, I have specimens of such fish. Science has named these queer creatures after myself: their foster father! Look at those sponge-like masses beside the lumps of rock. Well, *they* were lumps of rock two days ago—solid rock—now honeycombed by those tireless workers! So far as I can make out, they live on rock and on one another!

"You notice that the glass of their tank has a sort of yellow tinge? That's because it's varnished inside, a varnish made from pure gum arabic… the only thing I have discovered, as yet, which these creatures won't eat!"

As we sat in the little bungalow with Dr. Garcia: "You have some of the must remarkable specimens here, Doctor," said Trevvy, "ever assembled, I assume, by one man."

"It's a small collection," Dr. Garcia replied, "but fairly representative of the Zone."

"I was thinking," Trevvy went on, "that it is wholly unprotected. You tell me that you have two native servants who also act as keepers

and who live in a compound down there beyond the laboratory; but I should have supposed that in such a remote spot you would have been troubled by thieves."

"Thieves!" The doctor gave his great, deep laugh. "Who would steal any of these things? And why? Can you see a burglar dropping into the pit to steal that black spider? Or running away with the young puma? No, sir! Thieves don't worry me!"

"I was thinking more particularly," Trevvy murmured, "of those strange aquatic insects." He had set his monocle in place and was staring fixedly at Dr. Garcia. "Their habits, I rather thought, were of great interest. The point may not have occurred to you."

"The point had not occurred to me," Dr. Garcia admitted; and I saw the light of a startling idea spring to his eyes. "I find it necessary to reduce their numbers from time to time because of the amazing way in which they multiply. But, now you mention it, one of my fellows who looks after the things has tried to persuade me on three separate occasions that their numbers have been mysteriously reduced. I am disposed to believe, however, that during the mating season they devour one another. Nevertheless"—he stared hard at Trevvy—"you have set me thinking…. Nature has her own methods of adjusting things—"

I glanced at Paddy—and her expression startled me. She suddenly stood up.

"Doctor Garcia," she said, "do you known man called Valentine Oslo?"

"Why, yes, Miss Coburn. He has been here once or twice. Why do you ask?"

De Treville was watching Paddy in a curious way. I think she had succeeded in surprising him.

"I was thinking of something I once saw," Paddy replied. "I mustn't say any more—until I have made sure. But I am glad we came here today." Then, she added strangely: "Do you believe in devils, Doctor Garcia?"

"Implicitly."

"Paddy was about to say," de Treville interrupted, "that there is one at large in Cristobal!"

The Panama Plot, Part Four

The conclusion….

NOT the least mysterious thing about this highly mysterious business was my own failure to recognize the fact that a catastrophe hung over us all—that a witch's cauldron bubbled right under my nose and I never smelled it.

Spies are taken for granted in the Canal Zone. At Gibraltar the Military Intelligence Department keeps a file devoted to them; at Port Said and Suez they may be said to form small but select colonies. That Valentine Oslo was probably a foreign agent I had small doubt but I didn't think it mattered.

A subtle change had come over Paddy in Dr. Garcia's bungalow, and this had been reflected in her manner throughout the journey back to Cristobal. She was oddly silent, yet unable to conceal the fact that she would have liked de Treville to ask questions concerning her curious remarks to the doctor.

Trevvy talked entertainingly about polo and its great popularity in the United States. Paddy confined herself to monosyllables. This queer fencing continued right up to the time that we reached the hotel.

"I fully expect to be back for dinner," said Trevvy, as we walked up the steps. "In any case, I shall see you all later."

With a formal bow to Paddy he hurried away.

"Well," said Paddy, "there he goes! But where to, I can't imagine."

"Nor I."

She stared hard. "You mean you don't know, either?"

"I have no idea."

We entered the lounge.

"I begin to feel that the Major has a very poor opinion of female intelligence," she said.

"Oh, no! He has great faith in women's powers of intuition."

"Which means he thinks that normally, women are nutty?"

She was in an unexpectedly difficult mood, and although she drank a cocktail before leaving me to dress, her manner remained distrait. As we parted, "Maybe I'm going to find out something," she called back, "which the Major didn't know!"

I had the place to myself when she was gone, and I settled down to try to fathom things out. It was clear that Trevvy attached great importance to the basket lost overboard in Gatun Lake. I could see now why he had suggested that it should be opened. He was convinced that its loss had been no accident.

Oslo was associated with the man known as Charley Chee—and sometimes Charley acted or posed as a truck driver. Trevvy had seen this man before.

So far, I was on common ground.

But what had occurred in Dr. Garcia's bungalow which had so suddenly lighted up Paddy? *She* knew nothing of the chain of evidence which (omitting the debatable matter of the wine hamper) linked Oslo with a dubious alien who was almost certainly a spy. What did she hope to find out "which the Major didn't know?"

Of one thing I was sure: it was something which had made her detest Valentine Oslo.

When I had dressed I rapped on Trevvy's door. But there was no reply. I went downstairs, and was just in time to catch Mr. and Mrs. Coburn departing. They were dining out with friends. Mr. Coburn delayed for a moment.

"Keep an eye on Paddy," he whispered. "Seems like she's running a bit wild. Must be the climate or something…."

Feeling vaguely apprehensive, I went along to the bar. There was no sign of de Treville. I had settled down to wait for him when Garry Neal came in. "Hail, great chief!" he cried in his vigorous way. "Where's Paddy and the crowd?"

I told him that Mr. and Mrs. Coburn were dining out.

"But not Paddy?"

"She wasn't with them."

"Where's the Major?"

"I don't know."

Neal's jaw hardened for a moment, and his blue eyes were very searching. Then he smiled.

"Dine with me! I'm free for tonight. If the stragglers turn up they can join us."

We lingered for some time but none of "the stragglers" appeared. A call to Paddy's room from the main lobby got no reply. Neal, thereupon, found the chambermaid on duty—and learned that Paddy had dressed and gone out half-an-hour earlier. He had reported this to me, looking dangerously irritated, when the swing doors revolved and Trevvy came in.

His first words were so unexpected as to be startling. "Have you seen Valentine Oslo?"

Both Garry Neal and I stared dumbly for a moment. "We have not," I replied. "Are you anxious to see him?"

De Treville's eyes were cold; they lacked that dancing light of mischief which belonged to his humorous moods. "Where is Paddy?" he asked.

"Another blank, Major," said Garry angrily. "She slipped out half-an-hour back. Nobody knows where she went."

Trevvy groped for his monocle, found it, and fixed it in place. "The Yogis say that all women are alike," he remarked. "Please start your

dinner. I shall join you in less than ten minutes….”

He was as good as his word. We waited for him, and the three of us dined together. De Treville was obviously preoccupied; Garry was miserable: it was not a happy dinner.

But when, a disconsolate trio, we were about to pass the door of the dance room, I pulled up. It was a suffocatingly hot, still night. There was no sane reason why anyone should dance or want to dance except that the hotel band was playing.

But Paddy was dancing with Oslo!

Garry Neal braced himself dangerously. De Treville grabbed and held him. “Don’t be a fool,” he said quietly. “Your hour is coming. Dancing has taken the place of conversation—that’s why conversation is so bad nowadays.”

“But what’s the game? She must have been out dining with Oslo?”

“Exactly,” Major de Treville murmured.

“That man is beginning to get on my nerves!”

“Let’s go along and have a drink,” I suggested, anxious to avert a scene. “Differences can be settled in private.”

Only one other pair, professionals employed by the hotel, shared the floor with Oslo and Paddy. As the three of us filed off Paddy saw us—and I detected an almost appealing look in her eyes.

In the bar, drinks being served, Garry said, “I don’t know what you feel about it, but although I met Valentine Oslo here, all square, quite a while ago, his cutting in is beginning to offend me. After all, nobody knows who he is, and for my own part I can’t even guess his nationality.”

“I don’t think,” said Trevvy, raising his glass and surveying it critically, monocle in place, “that I should bother about his nationality.”

“What’s that?”

“Paddy is not attracted by Oslo. Paddy is in love with you. Tonight she is playing a very dangerous game. You must recognize”—staring at Neal—“that there are two sides to Valentine Oslo.”

“The side I can see is enough for me!”

“I am glad you recognize it. Certainly he is not a desirable acquaintance for any decent girl. If you will confine yourself to this side of Valentine Oslo, I think you will be pulling your full weight.”

Garry looked at me in a perplexed way.

“Maybe I am not too clear what you are talking about,” he admitted, and his eyes gazed frankly into Trevvy’s. “If you mean that it would be a good thing for me to take Valentine Oslo outside and punch him on the jaw—I agree with you. But this business about ‘the two sides’ gets me guessing.”

“Leave the other side to me,” said Trevvy.

Garry Neal was called to the telephone three minutes later. He returned and finished his drink at a gulp.

"Got to report down the street immediately," he said, his face very grim. "Probably no good reason—but orders are orders." He stared hard at me. "Listen! I have no sort of time for Mr. Valentine Oslo. The other side, Major, as you have said, is your business. The side I can see is mine. There's all the making of a first-class rough house here tonight, but I've got to go! Will you act for me?"

"With pleasure," I replied.

As the Air Corps officer hurried away: "I am glad," said Trevvy gravely, "that he has awakened to a full sense of his responsibilities where Paddy is concerned."

"But, Trevvy! You admitted that she knew how to take care of herself: have you changed your opinion?"

"Not at all. She grasped the truth of this appalling plot not very long after I had grasped it myself. Moreover, she knows something that I don't know! In her childish vanity she thinks she can play a lone hand. But it's a desperate game, Digger, and I am worried about her."

"Bad luck that Garry had to go!"

Trevvy swung his monocle. "He won't go far."

"What do you mean?"

"I have arranged with his commanding officer that tonight he is to be under *my* orders—not in a military sense, but as a matter of courtesy."

Before I could fathom what he meant, he turned, walked out, and I knew that he had gone to survey the dance floor. He was soon back. "Job for you," he said; "not a very nice one, but there are grave issues at stake. I find that Master Oslo has taken Paddy out onto the terrace. Your job is that of eavesdropper—in a great cause. Cristobal is threatened with disaster. The Gatun Dam sprang an alarming leak tonight! It isn't far below water level, and Mr. Symington, with a gang some hundreds strong, is working to block it. The pressure of water would soon turn it into a Niagara, and we should have a reproduction of what 'China's Sorrow,' the Yellow River, can do!"

"But, good Lord! That would be only the beginning!"

De Treville nodded. I went on in growing excitement: "The American Continent would be split in half! On all the nearby Atlantic seaboard there would be a Second Deluge!"

"I think it has been checked—thanks to certain information I was able to give regarding the exact spot affected. But, hurry! What I ask you to do is all part of this grim game. I have a move to make elsewhere—but I *must* know where Oslo and Paddy are going. I count on you…."

I went outside. The sky seemed to be alive with aeroplanes; the

hotel was apparently deserted.

A discreet glance showed me two figures in the shadows draping the further end of the terrace. I knew how I could get around to a point from which, unseen, I could listen.

"Every place in this hotel is like a Turkish bath tonight," Paddy said.

"The balcony of my sitting room gets any sea breeze that's going. Shall we sit out there? I have some real Bollinger '28 on ice."

"That sounds attractive."

"Come on, then."

There was a pause. "I'm not sure that Garry would like it."

"Are you afraid of him—Garry?"

"No—I was thinking of you."

Oslo laughed. "I cannot help being in love with you."

His caressing voice had sunk almost to a whisper. He drew closer to Paddy: but I thought that she averted her face. "If you'll keep that a secret—even from me—and concentrate on the Bollinger—"

I moved away stealthily, and found de Treville waiting for me. He asked, "Where are they going?"

"Up to Oslo's rooms!"

"I had anticipated it. But now I know what I wanted to know…. Ah! Here is the night manager." An immaculately attired stranger appeared, carrying a large key.

"I am sorry, Major de Treville," he said, "that you should have been inconvenienced in any way. The other room which you mention is vacant. Be good enough to come this way."

And as he turned, "I am changing my room," Trevvy explained. "I should be glad of your opinion regarding that which I have chosen."

In a state of mental confusion which I despair of describing, I proceeded upstairs. A door was flung open by the night manager, and a room which appeared to me to be in no way different from that previously occupied by my friend, was exhibited.

"You prefer this one, Major?"

"I think definitely, yes," de Treville replied. "No doubt you can arrange for my few belongings to be transferred?"

"I will attend to the matter at once."

As the manager went out: "Quick! Open the window," Trevvy instructed, "out on to the balcony—walk softly!"

We got on to a balcony which ran the whole length of the front. Hazily the fact came to me that an adjoining room, from which light shone out, was the sitting room of Valentine Oslo's apartment! Only a gauze screen obstructed the view; and that which I saw and heard—for the window beyond the screen was open—made my gorge rise dangerously.

Paddy was seated on a couch, leaning forward. Oslo sat on a low stool at her feet, his eyes raised to hers. He held one of her hands in both of his, and his face was working with emotion.

Paddy's downcast eyes were critical,—analytical. I could detect no hint of surrender, even when he reached up and threw his arms around her waist.

The heat of the night was not entirely responsible for the fact that I became bathed in perspiration. Trevvy's grip on my arm alone restrained me, I think….

He held her close, his dark head crushed against her sun-bronzed shoulder: "I have told you—how often I have told you—that I must go away tomorrow. Tell me that I may count the days, the hours, the minutes, until we are together again! Darling!"

"Don't hold me so tightly."

Paddy's words, her tone, momentarily cooled the man's ardor. He gave a gesture of despair.

Paddy broke away, and stood up. "I always thought," she said, smiling down at him, "that wine came first."

He rose slowly to his feet, watching her. I thought he was about to seize her in his arms again; but, imperiously, she pointed to a closed cupboard. "I won't even speak to you until I hear the cork pop!"

Oslo shrugged and, crossing the room, took a key from his pocket and threw the cupboard open. Paddy was watching him closely. I saw an ice bucket on a lower shelf, the necks of three bottles protruding from it, and I saw Oslo pull one out.

But although Paddy Coburn partly obstructed my view… I saw something else.

A large, yellow looking glass tank, resembling an aquarium, occupied the greater part of a shelf above….

"The next move to you, Digger," Trevvy whispered. "Slip back. I have orders to give to someone anxiously waiting in an adjoining room! You will find Captain Docherty of the police in the lounge. Tell him I have the evidence—and to act at once. He will understand."

Even as I hurried through the room so recently selected by de Treville I don't think the full facts of the thing had penetrated to my brain.

I crashed into the deserted and partially lighted lounge, wondering by what token I should recognize Captain Docherty. But I almost fell into his arms. Indeed, there was no one else in sight, save this six feet of bone and muscle, surmounted by a square-jawed mask of alarming truculence.

"Captain Docherty?" I demanded.

"That's me."

"All ready in Apartment 610!"

He gave a shrill whistle. A half dozen men appeared out of the shadows—and I found myself with Captain Docherty racing up to the door of Apartment 610!

A key was inserted, the door opened. We ran across the lobby. I heard a cry and saw a dishevelled Paddy facing me—at which moment the window screen crashed inward, casting shattered fragments on the floor. Garry Neal jumped in through the wreckage of the screen!

All this as we clustered in the doorway. Then, poising himself for one fleeting second, Garry, his eyes blazing—lashed out…. It was soon over.

I heard a sort of sigh, and as I turned saw Paddy drop on to the settee. She was very pale, but as Garry ran to her, she shook her head and smiled bravely… put her arms around him.

"Captain Docherty!" We all turned. De Treville was behind us.

"Thanks for the chance!" said Garry, looking across at him.

"You deserved it. Captain Docherty"—he pointed to Oslo who was struggling upright—"there is your prisoner!"

Oslo, less beautiful than he had formerly been, glared from face to face. He held a bloodstained handkerchief to his mouth.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "What nonsense is this?"

Two men stepped forward and stood one on either side of him. "There's no nonsense here," said Captain Docherty grimly.

"With what am I charged?"

"You are a spy and a wrecker!"

"Where is your evidence?"

Trevvy carefully set his monocle in place, and surveyed the battered speaker. "I saw you," he said, "talking to a certain person in The Hundred Palm Shoots last night."

"Possibly—to the proprietor, Charley Chee."

"He may even be the proprietor. Yet, in spite of the curious fact that his mother was Chinese, he is not a subject of China—nor is his name Charley Chee. He was formerly Naval Attaché in London. His rank was commander. He is now an Admiral—"

"You are talking nonsense!"

"Very well—a question: Where did you obtain the insects in the tank hidden in that cupboard?"

Fight was all leaking out of Valentine Oslo. Captain Docherty stepped forward and threw the cupboard open.

Paddy burst in… "I knew they were there! I have been in this room before. I never trusted Valentine Oslo, and one time while he was away for a moment I looked in the cupboard. I didn't know then what those things were, but when I found out from Dr. Garcia today, it all came to me. But I had to make sure—"

"What just came to you?" Trevvy asked quietly.

“The great dam! I saw that in time these things could burrow right through it!”

“You were born for the Secret Service, Paddy!”

There came sounds of hurried footsteps, and a police officer came in.

“Have you got him?” snapped Docherty.

“We’ve got him!”

“Charley Chee!” whispered Oslo.

“He’s no Charley Chee!” said the officer sternly. “Looks to me, chief, this thing will have to be handled diplomatically or there’ll be hell let loose!”

“What is the latest from Gatun?” de Treville asked.

“Thanks to your information they have found the exact spot—”

“Where the basket was dropped,” Trevvy murmured.

“And they think they have the leak in hand. Dr. Garcia, who’s been called in, says that the bugs that eat stone must have been put in over a period of months, they’ve burrowed so deep. They were clean through the facing over one area—that’s where the water was breaking in. They’ve stopped further destruction by putting in Dr. Garcia’s tankful of the fish that prey on these aquatic termites.”

“How you stole your original supply of the termites,” said de Treville, staring coldly at Oslo, “will no doubt come out in evidence. Meanwhile America owes a debt to Paddy!”

He turned to Garry: “You are marrying the girl who helped to save her country from a great disaster!”

The Mystery of the Paneled Room

First of a new series of crackling short stories about the amazing adventures of our fast-thinking Trevvy, the Crime Magnet.

"I DIDN'T want to have you out," said Trenk, our host, "until my new paneling was fixed."

Although Baxter's Farm, at which we were spending a weekend with Trevvy's old friends, still bore architectural evidence of its antiquity, it had been modernized in every particular. Mrs. Trenk had been an interior decorator employed by one of the big Fifth Avenue firms, and as Trenk had plenty of money she had let herself go on Baxter's.

The dining room, formerly the farmhouse kitchen, still retained its old beams and open hearth. But the walls were paneled from floor to ceiling in magnificently carved weathered oak. I had never seen more beautiful paneling.

Trenk's blue eyes twinkled in his clean-shaven, florid face, and he winked merrily at his attractive, red-haired wife.

"I seem to have seen this paneling before," I said.

"Sure you've seen it," Trenk chuckled.

Trevvy moved slowly about, surveying the carving through upraised monocle, and then murmured: "You evidently don't recognize it, Digger, but I recall it very well. It is from the smoke room of the old *Kravonia,* which was broken up over in Hoboken only a few weeks ago. The *Kravonia* paneling was world-famous."

"Of course!" I exclaimed. "I remember it now!"

"But you haven't told them, Uncle," came a clear voice, "about our mysterious burglary."

I turned. Greta, Mrs. Trenk's niece, had just come in. Auburn hair was evidently hereditary in the family, as well as greenish-gray eyes. In fact, she might have posed for a picture of Mrs. Trenk at eighteen.

"Don't spoil my story!" Trenk roared in mock anger. "Let me tell it my own way."

"I'm sorry, Uncle," said Greta, with a humility equally unreal. "I thought you might have forgotten."

"Forgotten! How would I forget being burgled, when it was only three nights ago!"

"A burglary!" Trevvy turned. "What was stolen?"

"Nothing!" Trenk's tone suggested disappointment.

"I should have thought," said Trevvy, swinging his eyeglass, "that this was a matter for congratulation."

"It would be," said Mrs. Trenk, "if it weren't so mysterious."

"You see, Major de Treville," Greta began, "it was on Wednesday night—"

"Shut up!" Trenk roared. "Like all women, you tell a story from the

wrong end. It was this way: The paneling was all fitted up by last Sunday, and on Tuesday night, Moll had the place in apple-pie order. On Wednesday I had luncheon here but dined out that evening. Everything was right when we came back. We are all agreed about that."

"I came in to get some cigarettes before going to bed," interrupted the irrepressible Greta, "and I am sure that all the medallions—"

"Will you stop!" bellowed Trenk. "If you speak again I'll smother you. A slight sound woke me about two o'clock in the morning—"

"You mean it woke *me,* dear," said his wife. "I woke you."

Trenk glared at her, then went on: "I got up at two o'clock in the morning because I thought I heard a sound down here. I stepped very quietly. I didn't turn the light up until I was right inside the door. When I did, the room was empty. I searched around. At first I thought that nothing had been disturbed: then I saw a funny thing."

He paused dramatically; on that pause, neither Greta nor Mrs. Trenk intruded.

"You see there are four medallions on top of the four big panels—" He pointed. "They represent mermaids biting one another's tails—a harmless amusement. I thought all the carving was solid, but it seems these medallions are separate pieces attached by hidden screws. Well, they are all fixed, now—but that one, just above the buffet, had been removed. It was lying there beside the old punch bowl. The one next to it, just this side of the hearth, had been partially removed, but was still in place."

"Extraordinary!" Trevvy murmured.

"Extraordinary!" growled Trenk. "Just plain imbecility. What's more, all the windows were locked—and all the doors. Not a soul but ourselves was in Baxter's."

"The servants?" I suggested.

"Clancy and his wife were fast asleep. I checked up on it. Tom, the colored boy, lives with his mother, who's cook, in a cottage three hundred yards away."

It was a perfect summer's evening.

Some neighbors joined us for dinner; in the subdued lighting, with candles on the table, I thought that this room had a distinctive quality which made it in many respects unique. Trenk was a powerful but amusing talker, and de Treville was in good form. The company I found charming, and I thoroughly enjoyed myself.

When the visitors, William Selsdon, a New York lawyer, his wife and their daughter, a vivacious brunette who had done her best to monopolize Trevvy during the latter part of the evening, were leaving, Selsdon said in his dry, legal voice, "I should advise you, Trenk, to make sure of all your locks, bolts and bars being in order tonight. That

burglar of yours might come along and saw the leg off a chair."

When, after a final drink with Trenk, Trevvy and I stood up, our host said:

"If that mad carpenter gets in here tonight, he won't be a burglar—he'll be a bogey! I am locking things up myself, and the key of the dining room will be in the grandfather's clock in the lobby. Any burglar who guesses that deserves top marks."

"Why not take it upstairs?" I suggested.

"Because Clancy and his wife will want it to clear this room up before I'm awake. So I left a note on the kitchen table which says. 'Wind the grandfather, first thing.' The key's on a hook right inside the clock."

"You have no suspicion whatever of Clancy?"

"No sir! He and his wife have been with me for fifteen years."

"That settles it."

I must explain here that my room immediately faced the top of the stairs. Trevvy's was next on the right, and the room occupied by the Trenks, was along a narrow passage. Greta's room opened into this passage also, and there was a service staircase to the kitchen at its further end. I mention the position of the rooms for the reason that, owing to mine being so near to the lobby, and to the fact that I was very restless that night, I heard a sound which doubtless was inaudible to those sleeping further away.

The time I guessed to be about one a.m., but I did not switch up the light to confirm this. I lay quite still, listening.

It was a sort of strumming sound, not loud, but of a quality which vibrated queerly, almost as though someone had touched a harp. It was not repeated, yet in view of what I had heard, I remained dissatisfied.

What could have caused it? Certainly it had come from somewhere at the foot of the stairs—somewhere near the locked dining-room door. I got up very quietly, found my slippers and dressing gown in the dark, and going on tiptoe to the door, opened it without making any sound.

The landing was in darkness, as was the lobby below. I descended the carpeted steps very quietly, complimenting myself on the stealth of my movements. A certain amount of light penetrated through a window looking out upon the porch, so that when I became accustomed to this I could see around me fairly well.

There was no one in the lobby, and the dining-room door was closed, but I noticed that that leading to the kitchen was open. My recollection was that Trenk had closed all the doors opening on the lobby before retiring.

I continued my stealthy progress in the direction of the kitchen. I

had been in there before, for Mrs. Trenk had proudly displayed it to us as a model of what a modern kitchen should be. So I entered it quite silently and without falling over anything, my purpose being to find out if the kitchen door, which opened into another little porch communicating with a yard, remained locked.

There was no moon, and shades were drawn across the windows. I paused, trying mentally to review the position of the furniture, for I was unwilling to turn on the light. I had just determined that my route lay half-left—in fact had taken a step in that direction when an arm, which appeared to be composed of steel cable, was thrown around my neck from behind, and my right hand wrenched up between my shoulder blades!

"Don't try anything," said a voice in my ear. "Just move where I'm pushing you. Switch the light up."

"Trevvy!" I gasped, "in the name of sanity, what does this mean?"

A black silk dressing gown with a gold girdle does not belong to any particular date or period. De Treville, as he appeared in that spotless blue and white kitchen, blinking slightly as the light flashed up, might indeed have been a musketeer awakened. The disordered, wavy hair helped the illusion, and his state of astonishment was a thing to remember.

Quietly closing the kitchen door, he began to laugh. So infectious is Trevvy's laugh that I laughed, too. But at last I asked:

"What awakened *you?"*

"The sound of someone unlocking a door."

"What! Not a sort of strumming noise?"

He shook his head. "Clumsy work, that…. *I* made the strumming noise."

"How?"

"Closing the grandfather's clock."

"Closing the grandfather's clock?"

He nodded solemnly. "You see, by the time I got down—and I proceeded very quietly—I had an impression of a figure crossing the lobby below, going from the dining room in the direction of the kitchen. I turned on my flashlamp and ran into the kitchen. It was empty. The door leading to the yard and the one leading to the servants' staircase were locked. I was puzzled. Then I had an idea, Digger. I went out into the lobby, carefully opened the grandfather's clock—and there was the dining room key hanging on a nail inside."

"Then you were mistaken, all along?"

"No, I don't think so." His expression became grave. "The dining room door *was* unlocked—"

"What! Unlocked!"

"Yes. I closed the clock and took one look into the dining room by

the light of my lamp, then quite unmistakably I heard movements above."

"You heard my movements," I said. "Yet I thought I went so silently!"

"The slightest movement is audible in the silence of the night when one is keyed up for it. I came out, leaving the door closed, and groping my way in the dark, reentered the kitchen and waited. The rest you know."

I stared at him dumbly: "If all this means anything, what it means is beyond me."

"We don't seem to have disturbed anybody," Trevvy remarked. "So come with me to the dining room for a moment."

We crossed the lobby, Trevvy opened the door, and switched up the lights: "Look!"

He pointed. I looked. A third medallion of the paneling had been unscrewed!

"This is the most darn foolish thing I ever heard of in my life!" roared Trenk. "It's pointless. Maybe the *Kravonia* was haunted and I've bought the ghost!"

He was staring at a round block of carved oak which he held in his hand, and I was staring up at the gap which its absence had created. Mrs. Trenk joined us: Trenk himself had aroused Clancy and his wife. Last of all, Greta came down—and I realized that she had lingered to adjust her hair.

Trevvy was lighting a cigarette.

"Apart from the fact that these stupid outrages appear to have no purpose," said Mrs. Trenk, "a rather curious thing is the order in which the medallions have been moved."

"The order?" Trenk challenged. "What do you mean, Moll?" Her name was not Moll, but she always bore it bravely.

"I mean that the first pair to be tampered with were on opposite sides of the room. Now this one, the third, seems to have been selected at random."

"I think," said Trevvy, "I can explain this. All three of the medallions so far touched are accessible by means of standing on various pieces of furniture. The fourth, which has remained untouched, lacks this advantage. Short of moving a table—a noisy proceeding—or coming provided with a stepladder, the fourth cannot be reached."

"But what in the name of insanity is the meaning of it all!" roared Trenk.

"It just doesn't seem to have any meaning," said Greta, staring from face to face. "Do you think so, Major?"

"Everything has a meaning, dear," he replied and smiled at her

gravely.

"But it really is very incomprehensible."

"It's got me guessing, Miss," said Clancy, a capable looking man whom I knew to be hardworking and trustworthy. He scratched his head and looked about him like one bewildered. "Of course, our room is a tidy way from here. No sound would be likely to reach us. But all the same this thing is beyond me entirely!"

Trenk continued to stare at the detached medallion as though expecting to find there some clue to the mystery.

"The thing that puzzles me," said Greta, looking from face to face, "is—how did he get in?"

"I am more particularly interested," Trevvy replied, "in how he got *out* …."

"Surely," de Treville murmured, "that titian hair is unmistakable?"

Three days had elapsed. We were walking along Fifth Avenue where my friend had been doing some light shopping preparatory to his departure for Europe. We had just come out of a store and he indicated a girl who was hurrying along in front of us.

"I agree. Let's overtake her."

We, also, hurried, Trevvy moving to the right and I to the left. We were correct. It was Greta—Mrs. Trenk's niece.

She pulled up sharply as we overtook her. Her eyes opened widely; in fact I thought that her astonishment was out of all proportion to the nature of the meeting. Our sudden appearance clearly had confused her.

"Why, this is a surprise," she exclaimed, looking from face to face.

"A delightful surprise," Trevvy murmured. "Can we hope to lure you to our hotel for tea?"

"I should love to come, Major, but I have to make a dash to get back."

"Most disappointing."

"I just rushed up to town to see an old friend who is ill in hospital, and as there is a party at Baxter's tonight, I have to hurry to be back in time."

"I am sorry to hear that your friend is ill."

"Oh! he's past the crisis, but for a time—" the catch in her voice told of deep concern—"everybody was afraid…."

"He is greatly to be envied, Greta," said Trevvy in his charmingly frank way. "I think any man would make a fight for life if he knew you were waiting. Am I acquainted with this fortunate fellow?"

"No." She shook her head confusedly. "We met on a cruise."

"Ah! those cruises!"

"Yes—nobody thinks I should take it seriously, but, you see… that's just how it happens, doesn't it?"

"I suppose it does."

"He was assistant purser. It seems very queer, almost like Fate—the ship was the *Kravonia."*

Trevvy adjusted his monocle and stared at her with naive interest.

"Yes. She became a cruise ship at the end of her long life, you know. And on her last voyage, Dick—his name is Dick Arkwright—had a crash in a taxi, going from the ship to the Company's offices. Concussion—he was insensible for nearly a week."

"That's terrible!" I said; "but you say he has recovered?"

"Yes, thank Heaven. He expects to be out again in two days."

She forced a smile and extended her hand to Trevvy, then to me! "I must dash!"

"Good-by," I said. "Give my best wishes to the folks at Doolans…. By the way, I suppose there has been no further burglary? There's still another medallion, you know."

"No, no more," said the girl, hurriedly waving good-by.

De Treville stood quite still for some time, ignoring pedestrians who bumped into him. Then he turned to me, dropping his monocle.

"It's odd you should think of the fourth medallion, Digger," he said. "I had thought of it, too."

"The association is obvious. If three, why not the fourth?"

"Just my argument. Therefore, later that night, when the household had settled down, I descended again to the dining room. You may remember an Arab coffee table and a large pouf ottoman there. By placing the ottoman on the table I was enabled to reach the fourth medallion."

"How did you remove the screws?"

"I am the proud possessor of one of those knives which resemble miniature tool chests. A screw driver is amongst the collection."

"What on earth did you do it for?"

"Out of curiosity."

"And what did you find?"

"Nothing."

I stared at him hard, but he had turned aside and had begun to walk back. He was silent until, going up the steps of our hotel: "I was thinking," he said, "that it might be rather a nice gesture if we invited Greta and her friend to dine with us, just to celebrate his recovery…."

Four more days had elapsed before our projected dinner party took place. Trevvy adjusted the balance in the persons of two amusing and attractive women of his acquaintance. Having dined at a popular restaurant, we proceeded to an equally popular play.

Trevvy, an inveterate playgoer, enjoyed the performance. I found my interest often straying to Dick Arkwright, ex-assistant-purser of the *Kravonia.* Making due allowance for his recent illness, he remained a

handsome fellow. He had the manners of a gentleman and I could understand Greta's feelings for him.

But there was something queerly furtive about Dick Arkwright, and he seemed to be ill at ease in our company. I noticed him from time to time glancing in an odd way at Trevvy.

It occurred to me that since he aspired to marry a girl socially and financially above his station, he might look upon de Treville as a powerful rival. I forget what the play was about but as I have indicated, my interest was much divided. The two ladies had an engagement, so we dropped them at a hotel. Greta and Arkwright accompanied us to our own.

Perigal, who valets de Treville perfectly, brought trays of light refreshment alluringly served, and an ice-bucket containing a magnum of wine.

"As I understand," said Trevvy, when we had more or less settled down in our sitting room, "that you, Mr. Arkwright, are to have the happiness of marrying Greta. I am anxious to drink to your good fortune."

"That's very kind of you."

"But, of course, you recognize the fact that there are obstacles?" Trevvy spoke very gravely, and raising his monocle stared at Arkwright.

"I do."

"As a very old friend of Trenk's, I should like to see those obstacles removed. You must know, Mr. Arkwright, that I have sometimes been called The Crime Magnet."

Arkwright visibly started. I detected a swift interchange of glances between Greta and himself.

"I am constantly finding myself involved in strange intrigues which don't concern me in any way. My friend will confirm this—"

"I confirm it without hesitation."

"He has shared some of these experiences," Trevvy explained, now more particularly addressing Greta. "For instance—unknown to my old friend Trenk, I learned that the *Kravonia* was to be broken up in a Hoboken yard and her fittings disposed of at auction. Now, I have a hat and coat cupboard in the lobby of my London flat, the door of which distresses me, and I had always realized that one of the panels of the *Kravonia* smoking room would fit it, and then suitably stained, greatly improve it.

"Accordingly, as I chanced to know the auctioneers disposing of the *Kravonia* fittings, I made this private purchase before the public sale."

He paused, and over the lace of Arkwright, whose habitually fresh color had been reduced by illness, I saw the queerest expression stealing.

"This panel," de Treville continued, "has been in the baggage room of the hotel from the time that I bought it. I am about to show it to you."

One swift glance Greta shot at Arkwright, and then, lowering her lashes, began with unsteady fingers to take a cigarette from a box.

Trevvy rang the bell. The door swung widely open; and Perigal came in carrying a massively carved panel, identical in every way with the four which decorated the dining room at Baxter's. This was set up against the wall. As Perigal turned to go, de Treville said: "You have not rescrewed the medallion?"

"No, sir." Perigal went out.

I looked at Arkwright. He was staring down at the carpet. I looked at Greta. Very deliberately, she was lighting a cigarette.

"I paid a high price, not knowing that Trenk was bidding for the other set. Later, for certain reasons, I decided not to mention the matter. I realize now, however, that the price was not too high. On returning from her last cruise, which included European ports, the *Kravonia* was searched from stem to stern by Customs officers for a consignment of smuggled diamonds. No diamonds were found. Am I right there, Mr. Arkwright?"

"Yes, you are right." Arkwright glanced up swiftly then down again.

"On my return from the Trenks' I had this panel brought up here and I unscrewed the medallion. I have replaced it, but have not the screws."

He stood upon a chair—he was a tall man and long of arm—reached up, and pulled the medallion from its place. He could just get his fingers into the recess revealed—and from it he drew a wash leather bag. He stepped down, and extended the bag towards Arkwright on the palm of his right hand. "This is what I found."

Greta sprang from her chair and walked to the further end of the room, standing with her back towards us. Arkwright stood up and faced de Treville. "I know now why we are here tonight," he said in a hoarse voice, "and you know why the paneling at Baxter's was tampered with."

"I do."

"There were only five of these particular panels in the set. They were all alike. As assistant-purser, I learned a long time ago that the medallions could be unscrewed. Now listen—and don't judge me too harshly. On that last voyage, acting on information from Hamburg, I discovered diamonds in the cabin of a certain passenger—this in the course of my duty, although the passenger was not in his cabin at the time. I thought quickly. I needed money…." He glanced at the bowed shoulders of the girl at the other end of the room…. "There's no need

to tell you why I needed money. I knew they were smuggled. I fell, I took a chance. I didn't report what I had found."

He paused, gave a twisted smile, shot a glance at me and then went on: "The passenger dared not make any complaint. That's clear. But I had to get rid of the diamonds. That night, when the smoke room was empty, I removed one medallion, and slipped the bag behind it. I knew of a dealer in New York who would buy without asking questions—and I couldn't resist the temptation.

"The ship was seized by Customs officers when we docked. No one was allowed ashore. They searched for the diamonds, which I had hidden behind the panel. There are two hundred thousand dollars' worth in that bag! I had to go up to the office to report on behalf of the chief purser—he was not allowed to leave the ship. I was overhauled on the dock, but I had nothing on me. Going uptown, my taxi hit a truck. I knew nothing more for seven days. Do as you please, Major de Treville—you have all the facts."

"Not quite all," Trevvy murmured.

And although her back was turned, Greta knew to whom the remark was addressed.

She twisted about; after one glance at her face I was sorry for her.

"He told me this in the hospital when I went there to see him," she said rapidly, tonelessly, her gaze fixed on Trevvy. "Yes, I was the Baxter burglar."

"In what way did I betray myself," de Treville asked, "on the night that I disturbed you?"

"I heard your movements on the floor above. Your rooms were both directly over the dining room."

"Foolish of me," Trevvy murmured. "You came down, of course, by the stair at the other end of the house and entered through the kitchen?"

Greta nodded, but could not speak.

"You escaped the same way, locking the door behind you. I assume that you hadn't time to lock the dining-room door, but merely replaced the key on the hook inside the grandfather's clock?"

Greta nodded again.

"Well, I am afraid these diamonds must be handed over to the proper authority. But as the ethics of the case are somewhat peculiar, suppose we have a final drink and sleep on the rest of the problem?"

Exit the Princess

Exit also the Lavender Lady who, with Trevvy the Crime Magnet, plays a strange part in this stirring adventure of spies and high intrigue.

"I PRESUME," said de Treville, "that this is our destination."

I presumed that it was, although the purpose of our visit to the little Connecticut village was by no means clear to me. It was called Hartley Corners, and I had never heard of it. We alighted, however, and Trevvy began to look about him appreciatively at a hilly landscape which reminded me of parts of Surrey. The resemblance, in fact, was most marked.

I was to have reason later to recall my first impression of Hartley Corners.

"You know," he went on, as the train slowly pulled out, leaving us in almost sole possession of the little depot, "you know how I regretted missing the English Spring. But now that Summer is upon us, I discover unsuspected beauties in the New World."

Certainly Hartley Corners was a pleasingly restful spot; and as we walked along its short main street, I reflected that the outstretched arms of a not so distant city had failed to break this link with colonial days.

"Of course," said Trevvy, looking about him, "we should have arrived in a stagecoach; it would have been more appropriate."

Glancing at my companion, I was disposed to agree. I could see him wearing a cocked hat, knee breeches and ruffled shirt, an extra flare being given to the whole by the monocle which he habitually wore. Even now he was attracting some slight attention from the inhabitants.

But he accepted it graciously, smiling upon those he met as Louis XIII and de Treville's distinguished ancestor no doubt once had smiled upon the retainers of a nobleman who offered His Majesty hospitality.

"That wooded slope which seems to overhang the town," he murmured, pausing and staring upward, "with its exquisite tones of green, is more beautiful than anything I remember."

The proprietor of the principal store now joined us and also stared upward. Seeing nothing unfamiliar, he presently transferred his attention to de Treville; and as Trevvy strolled on, giving the man a friendly nod, I was conscious of the fact that the storekeeper's gaze was following us.

I believe I have already mentioned that I had no idea what we were doing in Hartley Corners, and now I said, "Unless you propose to explore the neighborhood, using this town as a base, may I suggest that we have almost reached its outskirts?"

"Of course"—Trevvy turned to me as though I had recalled him from a reverie—"of course, my behavior must seem peculiar. It was

good of you to come. But in any event I don't think our journey has been wasted. This is really lovely country."

"It is. But the question of lunch must arise sooner or later…."

I ceased speaking. Trevvy had grasped my arm. From no great distance away came a call, in a voice sweet but somewhat quavery: "Will you buy my sweet lavender…."

It went on, that age-old song of the lavender seller, with its haunting melody and quaint words. De Treville fixed his monocle and stared at me. "Odd!" he remarked.

"More than odd, Trevvy. The words transport me to Surrey—of which this landscape reminds me. Do they grow lavender here?"

"Possibly they do. I rather thought not, but perhaps I am wrong. Very queer indeed."

We pursued our way nearly to the end of the main street. It was the dull hour of a hot morning, and very few inhabitants were visible. Hartley Corners was somnolent as only such a small town can be.

Then I saw the vendor of sweet lavender.

An old lady she was, silver-haired and frail. She wore a kind of broad-brimmed garden hat and a blue smock, and on her arm was a basket filled with bunches of lavender.

"Astonishing," said Trevvy, "simply astonishing! Old England in New England!"

The lavender seller approached us with a light step. She had wide open, clear blue eyes, and a healthy-looking, tanned face. She smiled very sweetly and proffered a branch of lavender to de Treville.

"Won't you buy my lavender, sir?"

"Of course—and what is the price?"

"Sixteen branches a penny."

"A penny?" Trevvy fumbled change in his hand. "What might that be in cents?"

"Two, sir, if it please you—or a whole bunch for ten."

Trevvy was regarding her with great curiosity, and now: "Suppose, Madame," he said, "I were to buy all your basket—what would you charge me for it?"

"Why, sir"—the old lady curtseyed gracefully—"it would be yours for five shillings."

"Shall we say a dollar-twenty-five?"

"If it please you, sir."

Trevvy smiled queerly: "Madame,"—he relieved her of her burden —"consider this my property. But since the basket is yours, perhaps you will permit me to carry it back to where it came from. It is possible I might be able to buy more of your lavender—my friend and I have a passion for it."

"Is that true, sir?" asked the little old lady, turning her bright eyes

on me.

"Perfectly true," I replied solemnly. I saw that her look was an elfin one, and that she had a grace and an ease of manner altogether out of keeping with her occupation. She was as one pretending to be a lavender seller. Despite the "if it please you, sir" which characterized her conversation, her accent and voice did not fit the part.

De Treville carrying the basket and the old lady walking between us, we presently came to a small cottage beside a long, private lane, a cottage which obviously belonged to some extensive property. The old lady stepped into the flower-grown porch and opened the door. "You are welcome, gentlemen," she said. "I have little to offer, but you are indeed very welcome."

I was becoming more and more intrigued with her odd manner. Trevvy set down the basket of lavender in the porch and, taking the arm of our hostess, entered ceremoniously, I following. I found myself in a very small sitting room overhung by disproportionately heavy beams. This cottage was of considerable age. It was furnished in such a manner that again my mind was carried back to Old England.

There was a useful little ledge which supported plates and other bits of bric-a-brac, running around the wall. There were one or two delicate water colors in which I readily recognized the local landscape; an open brick fireplace, a deep armchair.

Of our conversation with Miss Kingswood—for this, although she wore a wedding ring, she declared to be her name—I find some difficulty in giving any sort of account. She was unmistakably English, but at times she lapsed into facile French, which prompted me to inquire if she had lived in France.

"No, no," she replied, "I have always lived here."

Trevvy had fallen into the manner of a visitor who has dropped in for a chat with an old friend. We inspected the lavender plot at the back of the cottage—which I gathered belonged to a wealthy and hospitable landlord of the neighborhood, who permitted Miss Kingswood to occupy it rent free.

"South of Mitcham used to be the great lavender growing area," Trevvy murmured, as, glass in hand, he surveyed the banks of sweet smelling herbs, "but I never saw more beautiful lavender than at Low Fennell, near Newdigate in Surrey—at the Mertsham's place."

"I am sure it would be beautiful," said Miss Kingswood. "I should love to see English lavender growing."

Later, and just before we left: "Harmer always loved lavender," said Trevvy. He glanced at me. "I mean Brigadier General Harmer, Digger—known as Big Bob: I was with him in Palestine. I should like to show Harmer your lavender garden, Miss Kingswood."

"Any friend of yours, sir, would be very welcome," she replied

smilingly.

But always there was something elusive, elfin, about this queer old lady. Why we remained there so long I could not make out, except, as I told myself, that Trevvy's impulsive generosity might afford an adequate explanation. As we retraced our steps along the main street, our arms grotesquely laden with lavender, I inquired of de Treville, "Where are we going now?"

Trevvy surveyed me across a mass of flowers. "Back to the station. Trains are few; but I understand that there is one in twelve minutes."

"After having dragged me out here, surely you intend to do whatever you came to do?"

He continued to smile. "I came to do nothing. Surely you have known me long enough to have learned that it is out of my power to avoid meeting queer people. You cannot reasonably complain. We shall be no more than half an hour late for luncheon. You have assisted in stimulating the imagination of Hartley Corners. You are about to step on to a local train laden with lavender. What more could one possibly hope to do for you before noon?"…

During the days that followed—and few days spent in Trevvy's company were wholly uneventful—I began to forget the episode of the Lavender Lady. I had reason to suspect, though, that he had kept in touch with her. Sure enough, one morning he told me:

"I have learned a little more about our friend, Miss Kingswood. She is regarded in Hartley Corners as a harmless lunatic. She seems to be a protégée of the famous Senator Blore, to whom the property belongs; the little cottage is hers for life."

"In that case, Blore must know her history?"

"No doubt he does. But he is at present in Geneva…."

Washington now claimed much of our time; for de Treville, contrary to his own inclination, was apparently acting under instructions. To a cosmopolitan wanderer like myself, nothing could be more pleasant. I was without ties and could do my work wherever I found myself. That Spring and early Summer, however, were a memorable period in my long friendship with Major de Treville. This reincarnation of a musketeer was an odd figure even in a mechanized Old World; in the New World he was an anachronism.

One very hot evening in Washington he stepped into my room. "What!" He raised his monocle reprovingly: "Not even begun to dress!"

I was refilling my pipe. I glanced over my shoulder.

"As a matter of fact, Trevvy, although I won't let you down if you really want me, I was hoping to duck tonight's function. These formal tailcoat affairs leave me cold."

"My dear Digger, if I assure you that this function will not leave

you cold, will you come with more or less good grace?"

"You mean you want me to be there?"

"Exactly."

"That settles it—I'll come."

It proved to be a distinguished gathering, pervaded by rumors of war. On one hand I was assured on what seemed good authority that agents of a certain foreign Power—all officers of high rank—were established within the United States and were key men. To their call, when the day came, a great and organized force would respond. To these agents every detail of the country's military, naval and air strength was known. Their spies were socially accepted in diplomatic circles. I reported the conversation to Trevvy.

"Pretty grim!" he commented.

My next informant told a different tale. The danger did not come from the source hitherto mentioned at all. Another Power had been constructing for a long time submarine transports each capable of carrying a thousand men. An invasion along these H.G. Wells lines was imminent.

"They will come out of the sea," said my charming confidante, "thousands of them, some dark night, and we shall be overpowered, before we realize that war has been declared."

"Worse and worse," said Trevvy when I told him. "We can only pray that all these things don't occur at the same time—"

I was about to reply, when I observed that he had become distracted and was staring at someone or something across my shoulder. I turned, and understood his distraction.

The most beautiful woman in the room moved slowly in our direction. I saw that her eyes were fixed upon my friend. She was escorted by a court of young officers and others. Indeed, for her beauty alone she deserved their homage.

She was that most rare of all beauties—a perfect brunette. Her hair had the gleam of polished ebony, her eyes were as nearly black as human eyes can be. Full red lips she had, and features of which a Greek sculptor might have dreamed; her almost ethereal slenderness was stressed by a black frock so simple that only Paquin or Worth could have made it. She wore an emerald necklace, and a large single emerald decorated her left hand—a hand of that ivory tone which is so much more mysterious than the frank white of a blonde.

"Ah!" Trevvy murmured, and raising his monocle dropped it again. "I must present you, Digger."

He stepped forward to meet her, and it occurred to me that the beautiful brunette was surprised. I wondered if there had been some past misunderstanding, but: "Princess," said he, "may I present my friend." He proceeded to do so. "Princess Marie Petrowska, whom it is

wonderful to meet again."

The attendant court regarded de Treville without favor. As Princess Petrowska extended a slender hand, taking my cue from Trevvy I raised her fingers to my lips. Her expression was calm—her eyes were unfathomable. Yet somehow I had a feeling that she was not wholly at ease.

She was not in the slightest degree interested in me—she was watching Trevvy in that hopelessly fascinated way with which I was familiar; and his own manner probably reproduced that of his courtly but dangerous ancestor, the Captain of the Black Musketeers, when called upon to assure the Queen of France that all was well with the Louvre.

"I am thinking of our last meeting in Paris, Princess," said Trevvy. "I see that you are thinking of it, too. You remember, that evening, how disturbed M. Fabre was about the Italian situation and how fortunately I, in an accidental way, chanced to have learned a piece of important news. It was a great moment…."

"It was a great moment," Princess Petrowska replied. She had a musical voice. She was watching Trevvy as if hypnotized.

"You evidently have the good fortune, sir," said a young Air Service officer, now detaching himself from the group, "to know Princess Petrowska well. I have never had the good luck to visit Paris, but she was telling me tonight how much I have missed."

"Paris, in the company of the Princess," de Treville replied, "would be paradise, Lieutenant—er—"

"Hinton," said the officer, grinning cheerfully. "Excuse informality, but we have at least one mutual friend, Colonel—"

"According to the Army List," said Trevvy, to whom such cheerful impudence never failed to appeal, "I am still a plain Major—de Treville is the name."

"And Princess Petrowska seems determined to keep you to herself!"

But the Princess, silent, merely continued to watch Trevvy.

"I don't seem to remember, Marie," came a voice from somewhere at my elbow, "your mentioning Major de Treville to me, and I am always glad to meet any friend of yours."

I turned and looked at the broad, red, smiling face of an American statesman whom I had already met, as: "Major de Treville," said the Princess, in her monotonous voice, "I am sure you will like Mr. Homerton."

De Treville bowed, and smiled.

"I hope the sentiment will be mutual. His reputation commends him, and, personally, I am disposed to like him very much. But, frankly, seeing you tonight has brought so many pleasant memories to mind: Venice. That's a long time ago—why, you were almost a child!

The Prince was alive then, and you were both very happy in Venice. Do you remember?"

"Yes," the monotonous voice replied, "I remember." Always she watched him. Others spoke to her, but she did not seem to hear them; and her tired voice, her expression, made me wonder if he revived a past which she had preferred to forget.

There was a perfect babel of conversation about us, for the place was thronged. I became part of the background, not only to the Princess, but to everybody else. De Treville had stolen the scene. He shared it alone with the slender Russian. I thought what a wonderful pair they were, and I wondered if at some time they had been lovers; together, they could have reached the highest which life had to offer.

When presently a General whose name is known far beyond the frontiers of the United States requested her to meet a friend who was anxious to make her acquaintance, she left us almost apologetically. In fact, I detected a faint nod from Trevvy which I read to mean: "You may go now."

Excepting Lieutenant Hinton, the group of admirers melted magically when Princess Petrowska moved away. He lingered for a while, staring curiously at de Treville, and then: "You know her very well, don't you?" he asked in his frank way.

"I know her very well indeed."

Trevvy adjusted his monocle and assumed his most benevolent manner, that of a field officer talking to a subaltern whom he personally likes.

"I thought so, sir."

"I have known her and others of her… family," (I noticed the pause) "for a great many years. But no doubt you know her fairly well, also?"

"I wish I did," said Hinton—and his honest blue eyes registered something resembling consternation; "but I don't believe I do. It wouldn't be decent to discuss her, but she's terribly fascinating."

"Terribly."

Something in that last word, although it was spoken with a smile, seemed to determine Hinton's next move. He clicked his heels as though on parade, and bowed formally.

"Good night, sir," he said; then bowed to me: "Good night." For a moment we were alone in a corner of the large room.

"A remarkably beautiful woman," I said. "Evidently an old friend."

De Treville, who still wore his monocle, turned and stared at me amusedly. He dropped it and began to twirl it about his finger upon a pendant ribbon.

"You are possibly being facetious?"

"Facetious! in what way?"

"Surely you realized that I had never met her in my life?"

"What!"

"I am gratified, Digger. I have amused you twice in a week: when we bought lavender from the old lady in Hartley Corners, and tonight when I forced myself upon the Princess Marie Petrowska."

"But—"

Trevvy's expression changed. The smile fled. "A game fox deserves a good run," he said. "In this case it isn't a fox—but a splendid vixen!"

Back in our hotel, Trevvy and I sat in the lounge. "I trust," said he, "that as I promised, I have done something to relieve your boredom."

"You have relieved my boredom," I admitted, "but have got me guessing helplessly. We are going to Mrs. Homerton's party tomorrow night, and I am to bring Jane Sinclair. You—astonishingly—suggested bringing Princess Marie Petrowska."

"Why 'astonishingly'?"

"Because you assured me no more than an hour ago that you had never met her in your life before! This being so, she must regard you as a lunatic. Why should she go out with you tomorrow?"

"I assure you that she will be there!"

Knowing my de Treville, this assurance was sufficient. I had to suppose, since many women showed a tendency to fall in love with him, that he had prevailed upon the beautiful Russian to be his partner. I wondered what explanation he had offered of his singular behavior, but could think of none which would have been acceptable. I remembered his words to young Hinton: "I have known her and others of her family for many years…."

Prevaricate he did, and brilliantly, but a de Treville does not lie. It was very puzzling. I was still thinking about it when I fell asleep that night.

He was absent all the following day and I had no idea where he had gone. However, I had many good friends in Washington, including Jane Sinclair, who was staying with her brother Dick (Dick was attached to the British Embassy). She dined with me, and we were drinking coffee out in the lounge when Trevvy walked in looking as though he had returned from a journey and had not yet dressed. He surveyed us smilingly.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "I am beginning to believe, Digger, that you are happy in America." At this moment I became painfully conscious of the fact that if Trevvy had possessed the instincts of a Casanova his memoirs would have been even less edifying. Again I found myself forgotten.

"Mrs. Homerton," said Jane, "is delighted about Princess Petrowska coming with you tonight. She had no idea you were such old friends. But you are, aren't you?"

“I have known the Princess for many years,” de Treville replied gravely. “I knew her husband, the Prince, also. I am very happy to be bringing her tonight. And now I must leave you, for I have to dress….”

Trevvy was last to arrive.

We were all in the cocktail bar; and for my part, when he came in, I jumped off the stool and stood there, rigid, staring…. Jane Sinclair stared. We all stared.

I saw that his companion was small and slight, wore a dark dinner gown with lace sleeves and that she had snow white hair, very beautifully dressed. Her big eyes were dancing with merriment. They were blue, observant eyes. There was a momentary doubt—for here was some change of character. Then I was forced to accept the fact.

This was the Lavender Lady!

Mrs. Homerton looked frankly bewildered, when Trevvy escorted his white-haired companion to our hostess as Raleigh might have escorted Queen Elizabeth.

“My dear Mrs. Homerton,” he said, “forgive me if I am a trifle late. But Princess Marie Petrowska has had a long journey. I don’t think, Marie”—turning to the old lady—“that you have met? Our friend is Mrs. Quentin Homerton.”

The Lavender Lady acknowledged Mrs. Homerton’s astonished gaze with a warm clasp of the hand. “Please forgive me, my dear,” she said, and there was a new quality in her voice, too. “This is entirely Trevvy’s idea. But because I owe him so much, I simply couldn’t refuse. You see”—her expression became almost pathetic—“I lost my memory for several years. And *he* found it for me again.”

In a state of mute amazement I was presented, as were the other members of the company. “I feel,” said Trevvy, “that I owe an explanation.”

Although we were assembled at a cocktail counter, no man ever had a more attentive audience. Every member of the party knew the beautiful Russian whom we all expected.

“I was looking for Princess Petrowska. She and her husband lived a retired life of exile in the South of France, and shortly after the Prince’s death, Marie informed a near relative that she proposed to visit the United States. From that moment she completely disappeared. No anxiety was felt for some time, as the Princess—you won’t deny the fact, Marie—was notoriously eccentric.” The Lavender Lady smiled sadly and sipped a champagne cocktail.

“Nobody moved in the matter for over a year. Marie is nearly the last of her family”—he rested his hand on her shoulder for a moment—“and I suppose it was nobody’s business. Then, very belatedly, inquiries were set on foot. They moved slowly, but at last the fact was discovered that a Soviet consul had issued her a passport in the style

of ‘Marie Elizabeth Petrowska, widow.’ This discovery was made only three months ago.” He paused to light a cigarette for Marie Elizabeth Petrowska, widow.

“Customs authorities and shipping companies were notified and set to work. Marie was traced to New York, and there all trace was lost. I have known her since I was a boy. She was Marie Merstham, only daughter of Sir John Merstham of Low Fennell, Newdigate, Surrey. I was a guest at her wedding in Paris.”

“Dear Trevvy,” whispered the Lavender Lady—and something of the quaver came into her voice as she touched his hand.

“The credit for what follows belongs to your admirable Secret Service. I was asked to call upon a Miss Kingswood, living in Hartley Corners.”

“Trevvy!” I exclaimed, “you knew her all along!”

“Of course I did. You see, she went straight from New York to the country home of Senator William Blore, an old friend of the family. (These facts I learned later: Blore is in Europe.) There she had a nervous breakdown, but she implored Mrs. Blore to keep her presence a secret and her wishes were respected, even when she lost her memory. Always she had loved lavender, which, when she was a child, was extensively cultivated at Kingswood, in Surrey. The Blores installed her in the cottage, planted out lavender, and humored her in her harmless eccentricity.”

“Trevvy revived the dead *me,”* said Princess Petrowska, again taking his hand. “He brought two friends of Igor’s (my late husband) to see me. They spoke in Russian—they spoke of the old days… and I remembered.”

“But,” somebody began—“the Princess we knew….”

“A brilliantly clever spy!” de Treville broke in. “Many of your military and naval secrets have been stolen by her! Her credentials were faultless, her appearance and her manner worthy of her assumed rank.”

“But Trevvy!” I exclaimed, “you—”

“I gave her a chance, yes. You see, I have a sneaking weakness for those people. She isn’t a mercenary spy and she isn’t Russian. She is working for her own country. It’s a front-line job—and mistakes are not allowed. I don’t think she’ll make the post, but I gave her a good start….”

The Mystic Turban

In its folds, a fortune. On its trail, a society crook. Trevvy, the Crime Magnet, overtakes both in this swift new adventure.

"I AM told," said de Treville, staring ahead through the growing dusk, "that there is a celebrated inn somewhere near here. Do you know anything about it, Perigal?"

Perigal, the immaculate chauffeur, never moving his head, replied in a manner which reminded me of a ventriloquist's dummy:

"Peter Piper's, sir; half a mile ahead."

"Stop there," Trevvy directed. "We will sample Peter Piper's cellar."

"Very good, sir."

"You know," Trevvy continued, sighing luxuriously as he sank back into his cushioned corner, "that there are many points in favor of this country, notably the frequency of roadside inns. Don't you agree?"

"There are many other points in favor."

"So I observed," he murmured, staring at me through his upraised monocle. "The point to whom you were talking in the hotel lobby this evening when I came down, was very favorable, I thought."

"Dick Colton's daughter?—Yes, she's charming. We shall probably meet her at the Folliots' tonight."

"The word 'probably' suggests an understatement, Digger. 'Certainly' would be preferable."

He dropped his glass and began to hum a melody from a Broadway hit which we had seen the night before. I did not reply, for I was used to his badinage and our friendship was of the kind which allows long silences.

Perigal swung the car into Peter Piper's as though he had been calling there all his life. We got out and mounted the steps to a sort of Tudor porch. There was a massive door studded with big nails, a wrought-iron bell pull hanging beside it. Perigal, his leathery face expressionless, hauled on the bell and then, descending the steps, stood beside the car like a sentry.

The door was opened by a big Irishman of pugilistic appearance, and out from the warmly lighted interior of the place came a babel of conversation.

"Good evening, Peter," said Trevvy genially, "we are suffering from thirst and so thought we would drop in."

"You are very welcome, sir," the man replied with equal geniality. "Whenever I see a Rolls I open the door myself—and I'll guarantee to kill that thirst."

We found ourselves in a half-timbered hall. One side opened into a dining room, many of the tables already occupied, and on the other side into a bar. But my attention was immediately attracted by a

flower stall in a corner of the hall occupied by a smartly dressed girl who made a charming picture, embowered as she was in roses.

De Treville fixed his monocle and surveyed her smilingly. “Very pretty,” he murmured, “very pretty indeed.” The flower seller bent her head aside in a mixture of embarrassment and amusement.

“The bar is pretty full,” said the man who had opened the door. “You can hear them” (we could). “Maybe you would rather kill your thirst in here.” He threw open another door, and I saw a pleasant little snuggery, provided with a hatch through which refreshments could be served, and furnished with lounges around three of its walls. Upon one of these lounges a young man lay asleep. He wore evening dress and he was snoring loudly.

“Pay no attention to him,” said the host. “He passed out a long time back. Just give your orders.” Trevvy did so, and as Peter Piper, if such indeed was his name, departed, he stood and surveyed the sleeper.

“An excellent advertisement for Peter’s cellar,” he commented. “What is this document which he seems to have dropped?”

Following the direction of his glance I saw what looked like a visiting card lying upon the floor where the young man’s limply down-stretched fingers almost touched it. De Treville picked up the card and glanced at some writing on it. “I thought it might afford evidence of his identity,” he explained, “but it doesn’t. Look.”

It was a plain card; on it was written:

“Buy three white roses.”

Trevvy looked at the unconscious man. “Well,” he said, “our young friend will be out of the picture for a while.”

When presently we crossed the hall on our way out, de Treville paused and stared at the flower seller. She was certainly a pretty girl and seemed to be stifling laughter. Trevvy went over to her, bowed very gravely, and said: “May I buy three of your white roses?”

“Of course!” She smiled and selected three from a basket containing roses of various colors. “I thought *you* would guess.”

“Why I?”

At this moment I became aware of an ill-favored individual, apparently a waiter, who was watching us from the door of the crowded bar with an expression which could only be construed as villainous.

“You look a good guesser!”

Trevvy took the roses on their long stalks—the seller had wrapped them about with cotton wool and white paper—and asked: “What is the price of these three white roses?”

“Five dollars, sir.”

As de Treville produced the money, he dropped his monocle and

raised his dark brows.

"Somewhat excessive for three white roses," he commented, "but cheap for your smile."

"Thank you," said the girl. "I hope you have a good time. You are to give them to the boy at Turnpike Corner."

Peter Piper had left us to our own devices when we had settled the bill, and the evil-looking waiter had been called away. As we stepped into the waiting car, Trevvy said:

"Perigal, is Turnpike Corner on our route to Mr. Folliot's house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Stop there."

"Very good, sir."

When we were on our way, "Might I inquire," said I, "why you bought those three white roses, and why we are to stop at Turnpike Corner?"

Trevvy stared at me reproachfully.

"Because the card said, 'Buy three white roses.' Therefore I bought three white roses—and because the girl told me to give them to the boy at Turnpike Corner."

"I see. And you consider this explanation adequate?"

"In every way—don't you?"

Turnpike Corner proved to be a crossroads, and here Perigal pulled up. The entire proceedings smacked of lunacy to me, but when Trevvy got out, carrying the roses, I got out also. On the opposite corner I saw a messenger boy, sitting on what looked like a tall, cylindrical cardboard box. There was no traffic at the time on any of the roads. De Treville crossed to the boy, who now watched us expectantly. I followed.

"I want to give you these three white roses."

The boy's impudent face developed a broad grin. "Thanks to Mike for that!" he said, grasped the roses (and a tip) and passed what I now saw to be a large hatbox into Trevvy's hand. "I thought I'd have to stand here all night. What I'm supposed to tell you is this: there's a green light on a third floor in Park Avenue."

De Treville and I stood still, he holding the hatbox, and watched the boy hurrying away. From somewhere under a hedge he produced a bike, mounted and went racing off.

"So far," Trevvy murmured, "everything seems to be working according to plan."

"According to what plan?" I protested.

"Stop! Listen!"

De Treville set down the hatbox and clutched my arm. The sound of a car approaching at top speed reached my ear.

"It may have nothing to do with the matter," he went on hurriedly,

“but I think we should assume that it has.”

He ran across to Perigal and I saw him jump into the car with the hatbox. A moment later he was out again. “Drive out of sight along this road to the left,” he ordered, “and wait there.” Perigal drove off.

“In here!” Trevvy added urgently. “There’s an opening—and we shall be in the shadow of the trees.”

Protest I knew would be unavailing. I joined him in the hiding place which he had indicated just as the approaching car came speeding up to Turnpike Corner, and pulled up with a horrid shrieking and grinding.

The driver, its only occupant, sprang out and began looking about him in a frenzy of excitement. He was young, dark and also wore formal evening dress. He looked before and behind him, right and left. Then he began to pace up and down like one demented.

Finally, seeming to form a sudden resolution, he sprang back into the car—a fast sports model—turned, and went roaring away in the direction of New York, the direction from which he had come.

“H’m!” Trevvy relaxed the somewhat constrained attitude in which he had been crouching beside me. “That gentleman has evidently been delayed—and it seems that we have anticipated him.”

“He was furious! I could hear his curses from where we were hiding.”

“So could I. The problem is an odd one.”

He whistled shrilly, one of his many queer accomplishments and in the distance I presently saw the headlights of the Rolls.

When Perigal drew up beside us:

“We are returning to the hotel, Perigal,” said de Treville astonishingly. “Stop at the nearest callbox. I must advise Mrs. Folliot that we are unavoidably detained….”

What I said to de Treville on our way back to New York I cannot entirely recall; but one remark I remember:

“Why should we spoil a perfectly good evening because you have acquired a large hatbox from a bunch of lunatics?”

“To tell you, Digger,” he replied, “would be to spoil the story—and I don’t know yet how the story ends.”

“But what has the hatbox—”

“The hatbox is the operative factor. It is because of the hatbox that we are going to parade Park Avenue looking for a green light on a third floor.”

I knew the mood. I made no attempt to extract further confidences until, as we reached our hotel, “Is this a crime magnet night?” I asked.

“It is.”

When we entered the suite which we shared, de Treville went to his own bedroom, taking the box with him. “Perigal,” he said, over his

shoulder, “get a pair of scissors and cut down one of those green sash curtains.”

“Very good, sir.”

Stupefied into silence, I watched Perigal carrying out these singular orders. The work of destruction completed, Perigal went along to Trevvy’s room and I heard him knock at the door. A few moments later he returned. Having cut up the green material into strips, he was now pinning the strips together, length upon length.

“What on earth are you doing?”

“Making a turban, sir—Major’s orders.”

I lighted a cigarette and stepping to the buffet served myself a small drink. There are times when Trevvy is irritating.

“All ready, sir.”

I glanced at Perigal. He had several yards of green material draped over his left arm.

“What do you mean by all ready?”

“All set, sir. Please stand in the middle of the room. Easier to wind.”

“Perigal!” I said shortly. “What is this all about? If you mean that this thing is for me, I refuse to wear it. This is lunacy.”

I heard footsteps in the corridor. De Treville came in. He wore a truly magnificent green turban, decorated with a lofty plume apparently attached by a single ruby which, if real, must have been of fabulous value!

“Trevvy! What the devil does all this mean?”

“It means” (when he raised his monocle to survey me reprovingly it merely added to the grotesque character of his appearance) “that you must submit to Perigal. He served for some years in India and makes a very good turban. There are few men in the United States who can make a good turban.”

“But I don’t want a turban!”

“It is essential that you should have one.” Perigal began to wind yards of green curtaining about my head….

We drove into Park Avenue at that peculiar dead hour when diners-out and entertainment seekers are off the streets and nobody seems to be about. Whilst admitting that de Treville succeeded in looking distinguished in spite of his astonishing turban, for my own part, my head enveloped in green window curtain, I was so ashamed of myself that I shrank back in a corner of the car.

Perigal was driving the Rolls slowly along the Avenue. “We are looking,” said Trevvy calmly, “for a green light on a third floor. You keep a lookout on your side and I will keep a lookout on mine.”

It was I who made the discovery.

“Here we are!” I cried. “Pull in.”

From one window of a third floor apartment in an expensive block, a positive blaze of green shone out onto the Avenue.

We had drawn up some little distance beyond the display, and now, light shining into a car proceeding in the opposite direction, I observed the occupants to be two girls wearing *yashmaks*. "Trevvy," I began, "we are wasting our time—"

He checked me and pointed. Two men were descending from a limousine on the opposite side of the Avenue…. Both wore green turbans.

"That settles it!"

"It does! And I repeat we are wasting our time!" I said irritably. "This is a crazy treasure hunt organized by somebody with more dollars than sense."

"I might have agreed with you," he replied, "if I had not taken a peep into the box when I put it in the car—and recognized the turban."

The door of the apartment on the third floor was opened by a bewildered looking butler. One glance he cast at our strange headgears and then, without asking us our names, stood aside as we entered. A tremendous noise of chattering and chink of glasses came from a nearby room.

"Congratulations!" cried a gay voice, and Mrs. Ortheris, an attractive young widow whom we had met some weeks before, came racing into the lobby to greet us.

But suddenly she pulled up as Trevvy dropped his monocle and extended his hand. "We are here. Welcome, I hope, but not expected!"

Mrs. Ortheris wrinkled her smooth brow and stared from face to face.

"You are indeed very welcome—but I simply cannot make out how you come to be here—and wearing green turbans!"

"You were expecting someone else?" Trevvy suggested.

"Frankly, I was! You see, I know that you are not on the list; I didn't think such a party would interest you. But it isn't that. It's the mystery of it all!"

"Yes." De Treville removed his headgear and handed it to the bewildered butler. He began to swing his monocle on its pendant ribbon round and round an extended forefinger. "It is certainly mysterious."

"Please take that thing off!" Mrs. Ortheris exclaimed, and pointed to the parody of a turban which I wore. "What's it made of?"

"Window curtains." I hastened to obey her.

As the butler took charge of the wreckage, Mrs. Ortheris explained:

"You see it's a Clue Party, and so far it's been a great success. Although I am truly glad to see you, how you got in on it is so

mystifying that I just must insist upon an explanation."

She rushed us into a charmingly appointed little writing room, carefully closing the door as we entered.

"All the guests are over there—you can hear them. But before we go any further, please let me in on the mystery."

She was flushed and excited, but under de Treville's benign stare suddenly dropped down into an armchair and asked: "Is there something wrong? Please tell me."

"I would never dream, my dear Mrs. Ortheris, of alarming you," Trevvy replied, "but although I am sure you are in no way concerned, I feel nevertheless that there is something wrong. Yes."

"But what?"

She had detected, as I had, an urgent note in de Treville's voice.

"I have no desire to disturb the serenity of the evening," he went on. "But I feel that as your friend I am entitled to ask you: was this Clue Party your own idea, or did someone else suggest it?"

"Someone else suggested it. Why do you ask that?"

"Please don't be alarmed; I assure you that no harm has been done. But tell me who suggested it."

"Gerry Glyn."

"H'm!" Trevvy twirled his monocle reflectively. "I don't think I know him. Let me see, though, perhaps I do. Is he a man of twenty-seven to thirty, very dark, well-built if a little stocky, a small black mustache, heavy eyebrows?"

"Yes, yes, that's Gerry!"

"Dear me!" Trevvy stared in my direction. "You recall him, of course?"

"I am afraid I don't."

"The man at the crossroads—"

"Yes, yes, your description is perfect."

For now I had recognized the excited man who had dashed up to Turnpike Corner questing about him as one demented. It was Gerry Glyn, a socialite well-known in New York circles, but one whom hitherto I had not met.

The mystery grew deeper and deeper. And now, as if plunging into lower depths, the door opened and the flower seller from Peter Piper's rushed in!

"Oh!" She pulled up suddenly as though an obstacle had obstructed her path, looking from face to face. "Why, June!" She stared at our hostess, but then, recognizing Trevvy: "But of course, I knew *you* would get here."

"Do you mind closing the door," Trevvy remarked.

She obeyed him wonderingly.

"You don't seem to realize, Margaret," said Mrs. Ortheris in a

rather dull voice, “that something has gone wrong. Maybe you don’t know these gentlemen?” She presented us. The flower seller was Miss Lorimer, daughter of the tobacco magnate.

“Major de Treville,” Mrs. Ortheris continued, “was not invited to the party, although he is very welcome.” (Miss Lorimer’s expression indicated that he was.) “But he is here and something seems to have happened.”

“What has happened? Did *I* do something wrong?” Margaret Lorimer addressed the inquiry appealingly to Trevvy and, stepping forward, laid her hand on his arm. He pressed it reassuringly.

“As I dislike pre-judging people, my dear,” he replied, “I cannot at the moment say just what *is* wrong. But—”

There arose a sudden clamour, excited cries, hurrying footsteps, ringing of a bell—loud voices. Then suddenly the door of the room was thrown open. Followed by three police officers, the bewildered butler came in.

“Madame,” he said, “they insisted on seeing you!”

Mrs. Ortheris sprang up from the chair in which she had been seated, and faced the intruders. “May I ask why you burst into my apartment in this manner?”

“That’s easy to explain, ma’m.” The only member of the trio in plain clothes was the speaker. “I am Police Captain Doherty, and I have to request, Mrs. Ortheris, that you allow me to examine all the guests in your apartment.”

“What!”

“I’ve said it.” He spoke grimly. “Somewhere on these premises are jewels valued at two hundred thousand dollars!”…

The company who faced the police officers in that large room with its tasteful appointments where Mrs. Ortheris’ guests were gathered, was subdued and silent.

“The facts are these, Mrs. Ortheris,” said Doherty. “This thing was organized by Gerry Glyn and you fell for it. No blame to you. He’s accepted everywhere—he goes everywhere. But he’s a crook.”

There was a murmur from several of the guests. Captain Doherty glared truculently about him. “We’ve had our eye on Gerry Glyn for a long time, but until tonight we have never pinned anything to him. He’s clever as they’re made but he got off on the wrong foot this time. Now, I understand, Mrs. Orthtris”—turning to our hostess—“that having proposed this Clue Party, he organized it and took care of all the clues?”

“He did,” Mrs. Ortheris replied tonelessly.

“He undertook to provide the veils for the girls and the turbans for the men. There were all sorts of other clues, like buying roses and chasing turbans to various points around the city. Am I right?”

Mrs. Ortheris nodded.

"It was a variation of the old treasure hunt finishing up with a big party. The last clue was given by messenger boys stationed at various points, and all those boys had veils or turbans in boxes. It was their job to give the last clue to the first person who brought white roses. The last clue was a green light on Park Avenue, third floor. Now, I don't know about veils, but green turbans are not easy to come by in New York. A theatrical costumer would have occurred to most people, but Glyn had other ideas."

"I begin to understand," said de Treville aside to me, "the platoon of messenger boys assembled in the lobby of our hotel earlier this evening."

"And I shall be obliged, sir," said Captain Doherty, lowering his shaggy brows and staring at my friend, "if you will be good enough to keep quiet."

His manner, I thought, was unnecessarily provoking, but de Treville made no reply.

"Gerry Glyn," Doherty continued, "had arranged with a certain Captain Hargreaves who is attached to the Maharajah of Bhûtapûr on behalf of the British Government, to borrow a number of turbans belonging to members of the Maharajah's suite."

"I know he had," Trevvy murmured amiably, "Hargreaves told me this morning."

"Is that so?" growled Doherty. "I'm not surprised; and I suppose *you* are not surprised to hear that Captain Hargreaves was found insensible in his room at the hotel two hours back?"

But Trevvy *was* surprised. "What!" he exclaimed—"They knocked poor Hargreaves out?"

"They certainly did. Glyn doped his whisky. *He* knew that hotel was stiff with detectives. Nothing can come out of the Maharajah's apartments without an O.K. from the big shot himself, or from Captain Hargreaves."

"I see what occurred, very clearly," said Trevvy.

"It'll be clearer still in a minute! Hargreaves—an innocent party—had told the bodyguard downstairs that a bunch of hatboxes would go out tonight, carried by messenger boys. The boxes had been brought along by Gerry Glyn. Very well. The Maharajah and most of his party are at the Metropolitan Opera House. Glyn steals the keys from Hargreaves—and inside one of those turbans (a turban belonging to the Maharajah himself) Glyn has stowed two hundred thousand dollars' worth of State jewels!"

"Good Heavens!" whispered Mrs. Ortheris. "This is simply terrible—because I can see what is coming!"

"Glyn had to take a chance. He had to serve out all those turbans

before he himself left—the special one last. He couldn't risk anybody finding Hargreaves."

I knew that the Maharajah of Bhûtapûr was staying in our hotel. De Treville, who had known him in India, had recently paid his compliments. It was staggering. The whole thing had taken on a new complexion.

"This special turban," the detective continued, "was taken by an innocent messenger to Turnpike Corner. Gerry Glyn intended to overtake the boy. But his luck was out. He was detained by a traffic policeman for speeding and arrived late. He had provided for this though. He had an accomplice—a waiter at Peter Piper's roadhouse to which the previous clue led. Captain Hargreaves isn't the only casualty. We found Mr. Jack Monsen (one of the Clue Party, I believe) lying there insensible!"

His baleful gaze had never left my face; but now: "I suggest," he said, suddenly turning to de Treville, "that *you* arrived next and that you collected the green turban of the Maharajah!"

There came a sort of concerted gasp. Trevvy raised his monocle and stared questioningly at the speaker.

"Your suggestion is correct."

"I know it! It's out its the hall. There is one big ruby in front… but where's the rest of the stuff?"

A hush now descended upon us.

"As a matter of curiosity," said de Treville in his most casual voice, "where is Mr. Gerry Glyn?"

"He was grabbed by the same officer—trying to get back into New York, at seventy-five! He figured there'd been a mistake and he was going to the Maharajah's hotel. He never made it. He's locked up!"

"I see," said Trevvy. "You would oblige me, Police Captain Doherty, if you changed your expression. That which you wear at the moment is offensive. Yes. I came here wearing the Maharajah's turban —I recognized it. Its contents are in secure keeping in the manager's safe at my hotel."

The Elusive Jackdaw

Trevvy tackles the mystery of the talking bird, the silver locket, and Paddy the Peach.

THERE are moments when the company of my friend de Treville carries me back to more spacious days. Perhaps the subconscious musketeer comes to life, and I am aware of his reincarnation. As Trevvy lounged on the couch one summer evening in our high-up apartment in New York, such an impression was borne very strongly upon me.

He was lolling near an open window, wearing an elderly dressing gown and smoking a disreputable clay pipe which he treasured.

We had dined in our apartment and had no engagement for the evening. Some of the queer experiences which we had shared during our visit remained to be chronicled, and I was looking forward to arranging my notes without interference. At the moment, however, I was enjoying repose, lying back in an armchair, an iced drink at my elbow.

This repose was oddly interrupted.

"I love Paddy," a croaking voice remarked.

Trevvy removed the pipe from between his teeth and laid it in an ashtray. He did not otherwise stir except to turn his head in the direction of one of the open windows.

I presently discerned a shape upon the ledge outside: that of a white bird, which had about it a queerly unfamiliar look.

I did not move. "Unless I am quite mistaken," Trevvy said in a low voice, "a white jackdaw—and white jackdaws are rare."

"Paddy is a peach," remarked the jackdaw.

"The sentiments of this bird are first-class publicity for Paddy. I'd like to improve our acquaintance. But we must be very cautious. Have you any idea, Digger, how one attracts the favorable attention of a jackdaw?"

"Jackdaws are notoriously attracted by bright objects."

Trevvy disengaged the cord of his monocle, and held the glass up questioningly.

"The very thing."

"Paddy loves me," said the bird.

"You are clearly blessed by fortune," Trevvy said. Quietly approaching on slippered feet, he laid the monocle on the ledge inside the window where sunset rays glittered upon it. He returned to the couch and we watched.

The jackdaw fluttered its wings uneasily, then, recovering confidence, hopped into the room. I saw that it already held something bright in its beak, although what it was I could not make out. Each time, before speaking, it had put this thing down and then

taken it up again.

We remained perfectly still. Dropping the object, the jackdaw picked up the eyeglass, set it down again and seemed to examine it critically. Retrieving whatever the thing was which it had brought with it, and head cocked sideways, the bird critically surveyed Trevvy and then myself. The inspection apparently being favorable to our characters, the jackdaw flew on to the dining table where a bowl of fruit remained, and delicately detached a grape from a bunch.

"Close the window near to you, Digger," Trevvy whispered. I stood up as quietly as possible; he did the same—and we closed both windows.

The jackdaw went on nibbling grapes.

"Very odd indeed," said Trevvy.

The jackdaw was now trying to crack the thing it had brought in its beak, which resembled a small silver ball.

"I am intensely curious, I confess. Whatever is that silver ball?" said Trevvy.

"Probably something it has stolen from Paddy."

"I love Paddy," the jackdaw repeated.

"See if your scarab ring will attract its attention," Trevvy suggested. "Put it at the end of the table there."

I did so. The jackdaw, which was obviously quite tame, seemed to have accepted us in a friendly spirit. But it picked up the silver ball again, and surveyed me doubtfully from the further end of the table.

At this moment we were interrupted. The bell rang and I heard Perigal going to open the door. There was a muttered conversation, a rap on the door and Perigal came in.

"A Mister Alonzo. He says a pet jackdaw has escaped from his apartment."

"I see," said Trevvy. "Show him in."

Mr. Alonzo was one of those gentlemen from the Argentine who are doomed from birth to become dancing partners. His hair was very black and glossy, his dark eyes very fine, his teeth perfect; and he possessed the sort of figure which the composer of the first Rumba must have had in mind when he wrote the music. As he entered, the jackdaw obliged with an ear-splitting imitation of a London police whistle.

"Good evening," Trevvy nodded cordially. "What can I do for you, Mr. Alonzo?"

Mr. Alonzo bowed. "If I seem to intrude, please allow me to explain."

"I am all attention. My name is de Treville, and this is my friend, Mr. Digger."

Again Mr. Alonzo bowed. "There, you see!"—he pointed; his smile

was glittering—"There is the excuse for my intrusion. It is Snow White, my pet jackdaw. Although called Snow White, he is a gentleman, and talks and whistles very finely."

"We had noted this," Trevvy murmured. "He has already confided to us the fact that he loves Paddy."

"He further asserted that his love was returned," I said.

"He is therefore a fortunate bird," Trevvy added, "for he has assured us that Paddy is a peach."

"All this is just his fun," laughed Mr. Alonzo. "He is really a terrible thief, for you see he has stolen a small locket which belongs to my mother. Of no value, except sentimental. From my roof I saw him alight on your window ledge. It was fortunate."

"Fortunate indeed," said Trevvy. "I am glad that we succeeded in recovering your pet. Naturally he will know you, so pray take him away."

"Come, Snow White," said Mr. Alonzo, approaching the bird upon the table. "It is very naughty of you to run away from me."

Snow White watched him with a calculating eye, head on one side, allowed the outstretched hand to approach to within, perhaps, six inches, and then, momentarily dropping the silver ball, pecked furiously at Mr. Alonzo, snatched up the ball again and flew onto Trevvy's shoulder!

"Hello!" said Trevvy, momentarily startled and then, looking aside at the bird: "What's the matter, Snow White? Don't you want to go home?"

Snow White repeated the police whistle.

"I feel," Trevvy declared, "that there is some misunderstanding here." He stared languidly at Mr. Alonzo. Mr. Alonzo was sucking a scratch upon his carefully tended hand; his expression was no longer amiable.

"Infernal thing," he muttered. "One day I shall strangle you. See if I don't do that!"

"Poor Snow White." Trevvy glanced at the bird, and Snow White twisted his head and looked down at him. "Your master wants to strangle you. We can't allow that, can we?"

"Will you please grab him quickly by the neck," Mr. Alonzo suggested.

"Not at all. I decline to grab him by the neck. If he is unwilling to go with you, I prefer that he remain here. In fact" (he groped automatically for his monocle and then realized that it lay on the window ledge) "I seriously doubt, Mr. Alonzo, if Snow White belongs to you at all. Excuse me if I seem to be brusque, but your sentiments are so unkindly. Perhaps if you brought the bird's cage along, it might be more willing to accompany you."

"If I can grab it, it will accompany me all right."

"I refuse to permit Snow White to be grabbed."

"I shall go at once to the manager!" Mr. Alonzo turned and went out.

"Do you know, Digger," said de Treville, as we heard the outer door closing, "there is something really queer about this. Mr. Alonzo is obviously not the owner of the bird, and I strongly suspect that his object is to recover that small silver ball. There is a mystery here."

"Mystery flies to you as moths fly to a flame."

Snow White had deserted Trevvy's shoulder and was seated on a high cornice, regarding us from aloft. It put down the ball and croaked again: "Everybody loves Paddy. Paddy is a peach."

"Of course," Trevvy admitted, standing up and recovering his monocle, "the bird's conversation is slightly monotonous, but I feel that Paddy must be interesting—always assuming Paddy to be a girl and not a boy."

"I think the most interesting thing is the silver ball. Short of adopting Mr. Alonzo's suggestion of strangling Snow White, how are we going to get hold of it?"

Trevvy fixed his monocle and stared at the jackdaw. "I am still considering the point." He was still considering it when, again, our door bell rang.

"Ha!" said I. "Mr. Alonzo with the manager or the bird cage."

I was wrong. Again I heard the door open, heard an excited voice—that of a woman—a rap on the door. Perigal entered. "A Mrs. Wicklow, sir."

"Please show Mrs. Wicklow in."

Mrs. Wicklow possessed all the qualifications which entitle a woman to be described as "a dear old lady." She was buxom, fresh-colored, had silvery hair, and those kindly blue eyes which beget confidence.

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, and then looking up at the jackdaw—"I am so glad the bell boy told me."

"Pray sit down, Mrs. Wicklow," said Trevvy, pushing an armchair forward. "You say the bell boy told you. What did he tell you?"

"Well, you see, I've been searching the place for Miss Paddy, and I was just going out of the lobby in despair when I heard a bell boy say: 'There's a big white bird up in Major de Treville's room.' And that's how I come to be here."

"Mary Wicklow, Mary Wicklow," the jackdaw remarked, and without a moment's hesitation flew down on to her shoulder.

"Conclusive evidence," said Trevvy, "that our former visitor was bogus." He turned to the old lady: "And now, Mrs. Wicklow, Snow White is evidently an old friend."

"You know his name?"

"Yes, we know his name. But we don't know the story. We are anxious to learn it. Won't you tell us?"

"It's this way, gentlemen"—Mrs. Wicklow took the jackdaw in her arms and caressed it as one might have caressed a white kitten—"I'm terribly, terribly frightened about Miss Paddy, and finding Snow White here makes me more frightened than ever. I take care of Miss Paddy's New York apartment. I've looked after her since she was a baby."

"Miss Paddy," Trevvy murmured. "You see, Mrs. Wicklow, neither my friend nor myself know Miss Paddy."

"Oh, I'm sorry! I mean Miss Patricia Milligan, the daughter of Edward Milligan, the banker. She's one of the wealthiest young ladies in these parts. Just twenty-five, very pretty—and very spoiled."

"I see."

"Her father allows her to have her own apartment in New York, but, of course, I look after her when she's here. She returned last Thursday from a South American cruise."

"Surely she didn't go alone?"

"Oh, no: her aunt, Mrs. Esdaile, went with her. And on this cruise, you see, she met a man called Don Alonzo."

"We know Mr. Alonzo," Trevvy murmured.

"Indeed?" Mrs. Wicklow looked sharply from face to face. "That's very queer, if he's a friend of yours."

"He's no friend of mine."

"Oh, that's different, because Mrs. Esdaile just hated the sight of him."

"And where is Mrs. Esdaile?"

"She went back to their home in Portland. Miss Paddy stayed with me to do some shopping in New York. Snow White lives in our apartment. We have had him since he was a tiny thing, and it was Miss Paddy that taught him to talk."

"One gathers, from his conversation," said Trevvy, "that your young lady finds herself attractive."

Mrs. Wicklow laughed, a soft Irish laugh, but I could see that she was much disturbed.

"She has no mother, you see; and although I've done my best…. I wish she could meet the right man. Well, last night, this Mr. Alonzo called for her, and they went off to dinner. I expected her to be late, but—she didn't come back all night."

"What!" Trevvy exclaimed.

"Oh, I'm used to her late hours. But by breakfast time this morning I was really frightened. I called her father in Portland—and then about eleven this morning I got a note from her, written in her own hand. It was brought by a messenger boy and it said to send Snow White in his

cage with the boy, and that I wasn't to worry. I asked him where was he taking it, but he said he had orders not to tell me."

"Very strange," Trevvy murmured.

"I thought so too. And when noon came and no news, I set out to look in all the likely places I could think of. She often comes to this hotel—sometimes to lunch, and once in a while for dinner. And I was making inquiries here when I heard about Snow White." She paused, and then: "Ah! You little devil. I've got it at last!"

Mary Wicklow after much skilful maneuvering had succeeded in wheedling the silver ball from the jackdaw. Snow White, seated on the edge of the table, was flapping his wings and shrieking angrily. But now I noticed Mrs. Wicklow's expression with some alarm. She was staring at the thing which she held in her hand.

"Apparently you recognize it, Mrs. Wicklow," said Trevvy.

"Yes. It is her sachet."

"It is not clear to me even now"—Trevvy moved across to her —"what this object is."

"It is silver and gold filigree, very beautifully made. Miss Paddy bought it three years ago in Damascus. It is meant for scent, but mostly she uses it as an ornament, indeed, almost as a mascot. She has different colored cords for her different dresses. I know she had it on when she went out last night. It was Snow White's favorite plaything. Whenever he stole it—and he was always stealing it—it was the devil's own work to get it from him."

"Is it hollow?"

"Yes, sir." She handed it to Trevvy. "Can you see where it unscrews?"

Trevvy's expression was very grave, I thought, as he opened the hollow ball, and tipped out a tiny piece of folded paper onto his palm. Mrs. Wicklow stood up in her excitement. I approached more closely. Adjusting his monocle with great care, Trevvy smoothed out the fragment of paper. It was of fine texture, but I think the presence of faint gold lettering upon it gave me the real clue to its character.

It was a cigarette paper.

On it, in tiny penciled writing, was a message which Trevvy read aloud:

"Prisoner in roof garden apartment of Don Alonzo. Help at once. Paddy Milligan."

"I quite understand your failure to inform the police, Mrs. Wicklow," said Trevvy. "You are used to these escapades of Miss Milligan and naturally want to protect her reputation. But this time it looks as though the police will have to be informed."

"Oh, I'm so frightened. I don't know what to do. But I hate to bring the police in."

"Where is this man's apartment?"

"I didn't know he had one, in fact. I know nothing about him."

"I know all I want to know," Trevvy murmured. "I was merely thinking that without the aid of the police, it might be difficult to trace this place. However, we can try the telephone directory."

"That's no good, sir; I thought of it this morning. I looked for his name, but it isn't there."

"More and more difficult. Evidently Paddy doesn't know the address, or she would have given it. By the way, when are you expecting Mr. Milligan?"

"He should be here already."

"Have you left any message at your own apartment?"

"Yes, the elevator boy will tell him to wait."

"Suppose," Trevvy suggested, "you get on the phone, and if he is there, ask him to join us at once."

Mrs. Wicklow went out into the lobby, and presently we heard the jingle of the phone.

"Does any means occur to you, Digger," Trevvy asked, "of getting this man's address? One presumes that this evidently crazy girl was driven there last night, and didn't bother to notice where she was going."

"It may be merely a rented apartment—it may belong to some friend of Alonzo's."

"It's a possibility. But I feel that a fellow of that kind would be known to the night birds of New York." He crossed and threw the door open. "Perigal!" he called.

Perigal entered. "Yes, sir."

"You saw Mr. Don Alonzo, a while ago, here? How should you describe him?"

"What they call a gigolo, sir."

"Right. Now in the pursuit of his profession, he has no doubt become known to head waiters, hall porters, dance band leaders, and other figures of the entertainment world. Is there a band playing here this evening?"

"Yes, sir. Babylonian Room."

"Very good. Begin there, Perigal. Take this ten dollar bill, and ask anyone who looks at all likely to know, where a message can be sent to Mr. Don Alonzo. Say a lady is inquiring."

"Very good, sir." Perigal went out.

"An arrow in the air," Trevvy said, "but it may reach the target."

Perigal had not returned when Edward Milligan arrived. He was a big man, in every way. He had shaggy brows and penetrating gray eyes. His manner was assured and calm.

"You've nothing to reproach yourself for, Mary," he said, turning to

where Mrs. Wicklow sat drying her eyes. “You are not to blame in the least, but this must be the last of Paddy’s escapades. I’ve had enough of them. I am much indebted to you, sir”—turning to de Treville —“Without you, indeed, we should have had no news.”

“Say, rather, without Snow White.”

Snow White, from the table upon which he was partaking of light refreshment, remarked: “I love Paddy.”

“You must be a very long-suffering bird,” growled Milligan. “As a matter of fact,” he went on, “my sister hurried down to warn me about this man. Heaven knows what Paddy sees in him, but she has had some queer friendships.” He began to walk up and down, and I could see that he retained his composure only by an effort.

There came a rap on the door. The door opened and Perigal entered.

“Head waiter knows Don Alonzo, sir,” he announced, “but not his address. Got latter from one of the hostesses. Here it is.”

“You see!” Trevvy exclaimed, smiling. “My arrow found a target.”

He took the paper from Perigal.

“Ah! No great distance from here; in fact, probably in sight of our windows if we knew which way to look.” He handed the slip to Edward Milligan. “Accounts for the presence of Snow White. Alonzo was not lying when he told us he had followed the bird’s flight.”

“Do you know where this place is, Mary?” Milligan demanded, showing the address to Mrs. Wicklow.

“Yes, sir, two blocks from here.”

Five minutes later, Edward Milligan, Trevvy, Perigal and I stood on the landing before the door of Don Alonzo’s roof apartment. At the first ring, a radio had started playing very loudly inside. This uproar continued, but no one opened the door.

We rang again, and Milligan beat upon the panel with his clenched fist.

“Open this door!” he roared.

The radio blared away. But standing very close to the door, I detected a sound which did not come from the radio. I met Trevvy’s eye.

He nodded. “Yes! someone calling for help! But *this* may do it.”

He raised his voice to parade-ground pitch! “Police here! Open this door at once! Or we blow the lock out!”

The radio went on playing. Milligan continued to beat with his fist.

Then the door was opened very slightly. I saw Don Alonzo’s face, shining with perspiration, looking out at us. He opened his mouth to speak. In one huddled rush we were all inside.

“What is the meaning of this?” Alonzo cried.

I found myself in an over-furnished hall; statuettes and pictures of

women were the predominant form of decoration. There were shaded lights and too many cushions.

"Turn that radio off!" roared Milligan.

Trevvy, ignoring Alonzo, drew a silk portiere aside and walked into a sitting room which more nearly resembled a harem than a New York apartment. The radio was in the corner. Trevvy crossed and cut it off.

"Where's my daughter?" Milligan demanded, his face red with fury.

"Father!" came a stilled cry. "Father! Oh, thank God you're here!"

Milligan rushed to one of the two doors. It was locked. He turned, and stared at Alonzo, who, followed by Perigal, was just entering. Words were unnecessary.

Don Alonzo crossed, took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door. A girl tottered out and fell into Edward Milligan's arms.

She was normally, no doubt, very attractive. But now, wild-eyed and dishevelled, and wearing an evening frock which was torn in places, she presented a pathetic picture.

"Father!" she said. "I've been such a fool! But you must forgive me. He had me locked in there, and every time anyone came to the door, he started the radio. I'm nearly suffocating! Get me into the air."

"Perigal," Trevvy directed coldly. "I wish Mr. Alonzo to remain. You attend to the matter!"

We went into the room beyond, a sort of dining room, in which I noted several interesting points. There was a large empty bird cage on a side table; a window pane was shattered; and a number of ornaments lay smashed upon the carpet. French windows, which again Mr. Alonzo had to unlock, gave access to the roof. There was a Japanese garden out there, with a marble fish pond, and a vine-grown loggia in which were white cane chairs and tables.

Paddy Milligan sank into one of the chairs, and her father, pushing Alonzo inside, stepped back into the room, presently to come out carrying a pitcher of water and a tumbler.

"I've been such a fool," the girl repeated, looking up pathetically. "I knew the sort of man I had to deal with before the ship docked, but even then I didn't know how bad he was. He got me here last night. I didn't know the place belonged to him. We were supposed to be coming to a party. Can you imagine—he had everything fixed—"

"Fixed for what?" Milligan growled.

"Fixed to marry me! He thought he could blackmail me into it. I began by fighting."

She was rapidly recovering her poise, and I read in the gray eyes which were so like those of her father, that this spoiled child of a wealthy parent had a lot of fight in her.

"It didn't come to anything. I got terrified when I saw the daylight. I began to think. He imagined I was weakening; and I told him I

would stay quiet and maybe go away with him as he wanted, if he would let me have Snow White. He fell for it… but he stood over me while I wrote to Mary and he made me put in not to worry—"

There was a loud outcry from somewhere inside. A scuffle seemed to be in progress. Then came silence. "Pray proceed, my dear," said Trevvy calmly. "It is only Perigal."

"He went out and left me locked in that room—with the radio full on in the lounge. But when he came back, with Snow White, I had my plan all set. I told him to leave me alone to think. And at last he did —"

She became silent for a moment. Edward Milligan smoothed her disordered hair.

"Snow White has flown away ever so often. Somebody always brought him back. I was counting on Snow White. I had nothing to write on. Don imagined I might smash a window and throw a message into the street. I unrolled a cigarette. I had a small pencil in my purse. I didn't notice the address of this place, but I wrote an S.O.S. and put it into the little silver sachet and gave it to Snow White. Then," (a grim note entered her voice) "I smashed a window and let him go. It was my only chance."

"I must congratulate you," said Trevvy, "on your resourcefulness, but not upon your choice of friends."

"Don unlocked the door and rushed in. He grasped the thing in a second. He dashed out—leaving the radio on. When he came back, half an hour later… he tried to force me to tell him what I had written —"

Her voice faltered.

De Treville turned. "Perigal!"

"Sir!" came a muffled voice.

"We should like a few words with Mr. Alonzo."

Came sounds of renewed scuffling, and then: "You swine! You're breaking my arm! Let go, I say!" Held in the sure grip of the leather-faced Perigal, Don Alonzo appeared. He glared from one to another of us.

Trevvy raised his monocle.

"Perigal!" He pointed to the fish pond. "Be good enough to throw Mr. Alonzo in."

"Yes, sir."

We all became breathlessly silent. A muffled shriek broke that silence, as Don Alonzo pitched head first into the pond. A fountain of water arose; most of us got a drenching. The man floundered, came up, clutched at the edge and glared at us. Trevvy stared at him coldly. "Remain where you are," he said, "until we go."

As the group turned to leave, Mr. Milligan stepped sharply forward,

seized the immersed gigolo by the coat collar and jerked him out of the pond and to his feet. The man's startled cry was cut short by a swift blow, and again he hurtled backward into the agitated water.

Mr. Milligan caught up with us. He was wiping his hands, smiling for the first time in hours.

"Just to make sure," he said to Trevvy.

The Oversized Trunk

Trevvy, the debonair sleuth, matches his wits against a gang of Nazi looters—and wins a very strange prize….

"I CAN'T make up my mind," said Trevvy, "whether he's interested in us or the blonde."

"Who is he?" I asked.

"I don't know—but I suspect." Trevvy adjusted his monocle and stared at a meek-looking man who had just taken a seat at an adjoining table. I had noticed the man, for he was bowlegged and wore his round hat as if it were a pork pie on his head. Inverted, it now lay beside a beer glass. Not far away a pretty blonde woman sat sipping coffee, and to her the pie-hatted one had bowed.

On this pleasant July morning, just before Turkey had cast off her uneasy cloak of neutrality, the Petit Champs afforded a spectacle which was curious, though common, in Istanbul: sworn enemies sipped drinks side by side under the trees. It was an atmosphere made to order for my friend Bernard de Treville—"Trevvy" for short—on whom I had long since bestowed the title of "The Crime Magnet"; crooks seemed irresistibly attracted to his neighborhood, like the moth to the flame, and with equally disastrous consequences to themselves. This quality explained his being "lent" temporarily to the American Art Salvage Commission—this and his intimate knowledge of Mediterranean countries, where many of the treasures stolen by the Nazis were thought to be hidden.

Trevvy was thoroughly enjoying himself. Not so the bowlegged man. I've yet to see anyone who can enjoy himself under Trevvy's analytical stare. The bowlegged man couldn't; he rose and went into the café. In a flash, de Treville's long arm shot out. Unseen by anyone but myself, he grabbed the round hat. "Quick—stand up!" he said to me.

I SPRANG up, staring blankly. Trevvy dropped the hat on my chair: "Sit on it! And don't stir." I subsided on the hat, which collapsed under me with a faint concertina note. Trevvy let his monocle drop.

"What on earth is the idea?" I asked.

Without answering me, Trevvy glanced around. About us buzzed a *charivari* of tongues. Here were diplomats, dealers, spies and a sprinkling of feminine glamour—particularly spies. "This should develop amusingly," said Trevvy…. "Ah! he returns."

The owner of the hat upon which I was sitting reappeared, smoking a cigar. He studiously avoided looking in our direction. But no sooner had he resumed his seat, than he was up again. He stared under the table, under the chair, and finally up at the sky, as though he suspected that his hat might have taken flight. De Treville lolled back,

monocle in place, surveying the blonde lady with frank admiration.

I became almost as restless as if sitting on a hot stove. Presently, very red in the face, the man finished his beer, went into the café again. “This may amuse you, Trevvy,” I said, “but *I* find it most embarrassing.”

A moment later the man reappeared, talking in German to the manager. A second useless search was made, and the manager shrugged his shoulders apologetically. Finally the two walked off. As the German had bowed, curtly, to the fair blonde, evidently he did not intend to return. Trevvy stood up to go, but:

“Wait a moment,” I muttered. “This hat!”

“Ah!” Trevvy exclaimed, in apparent surprise, “you have it there!” He took up the battered object, turned—and walked across to the blonde lady! “We must make our apologies,” he murmured to me.

“I should prefer to make my getaway!”

But already Trevvy was bowing to the fair one in a manner which went out of fashion with powdered wigs. I doubted I heard aright when he said: “Madame, if I seem to intrude, forgive me. But I believe this hat belongs to the gentleman who has just gone out, and I beg you to return it. For some inexplicable reason, my friend has been sitting on it.”

FOR one awful moment the glance of two blue eyes rested on each of us in turn, questioningly; then she smiled, finally laughed outright. “How grotesque! I fear my acquaintance with Herr Glückner is too slight, but I can give you his address. Will that do?”

De Treville, with his well-known charm, assured her it would do perfectly. Taking out his wallet, he noted down an address and offered his card, at the same time presenting me.

“I am Madame Chemberli,” said our new acquaintance, “and I should be most happy to see you sometime at my villa. Why not this afternoon?”

“Indeed, Madame Chemberli,” said Trevvy, “since you are so kind, I should love to come. The beauty of your villa and your art collection is almost as famous as that of its mistress.” He raised her fingers to his lips, as his ancestor, Captain of the King’s Musketeers, must once have kissed the delicate hand of the Queen of France.

“I suspected that fellow to be Glückner,” said Trevvy, when we were outside.

“And who is Glückner?”

“The Gestapo chief from Ankara—a mild looking but bloodthirsty ruffian. I wonder what’s afoot. His relations with the famous Madame Chemberli do not seem over cordial.”

Having sent the pie hat to the address of its owner, we were now proceeding in a taxi to the Bashi Jaddesi, near the Great Bazaar. I had

no idea why we were going there, but judged my friend must be on the track of some of the treasures stolen by the Nazis which he had been commissioned to find.

"She is famous, then?" I asked.

De Treville nodded. "I had been hoping to make her acquaintance. She is, as you noted, a woman of great charm. Her Nazi sympathies she has never disguised. She was once an actress. Her villa is quite a show place. It is said that one of the Nazi bosses takes a deep interest in her affairs."

Leaving our taxi in the Bashi Jaddesi, we walked down one of those aromatic, vaulted streets of the Great Bazaar. Crossing a courtyard, we entered a tiny office, its shelves laden with inlaid caskets and other exquisite examples of craftsmanship. In its dusky interior an elderly Turk was seated—evidently expecting us. He clapped his hands and a boy appeared with coffee.

SOME amiable but pointless conversation followed, when in from the courtyard stepped a very old man. He had a small head, long arms and astonishingly large hands. A straggling white beard lent him the appearance of something materialized out of a bottle, but his cunning little eyes were worldly.

"Ah!" Trevvy exclaimed. "Our old friend Abdul! Blessing and peace be with you, Bimbâshi…. This is Abdul the Aged," he explained to me. "He is ninety-five years old. He is the *doyen* of the Guild of Hamels (porters). Also the strongest man in Istanbul."

"In Turkey, my lord."

"The strongest man in Turkey. He claims to have carried a grand piano on his back from the New Bridge down to the pier."

"I *have* carried a load such as you describe, my benefactor, and this only one moon ago. No other man alive could have done it." Abdul's little eyes sparkled with pride, and he grinned like a vain schoolboy, displaying a large mouth entirely free of teeth.

"And you have news for me, Abdul?"

"I have news, my lord. Early this morning—soon after dawn—I was summoned to meet a plane at the airfield. It was a German plane, from Berlin."

"Was it the Embassy plane?"

"No. It was private—but diplomatic. A lady was there to meet this plane. She had a car with a trailer. I carried a great trunk, nearly as big as a mosque and filled, I think, with lead, from the plane to the trailer. It had to be carried upright. Ah, by the beard! It was a load for a *man!"*

De Treville glanced at me. "This may explain Glückner's presence. New stolen treasures from Berlin just arrived! Do you know the lady, Abdul?"

"But, certainly, for I went there in the car to carry this great trunk into her house. It was Madame Chemberli…."

ON THE way back to our hotel I said, "This man Glückner knows no doubt that you are on the lookout for looted Nazi treasure. But where does Madame Chemberli come in?"

Trevvy twirled his monocle. "I have an idea there is a black market in these things among the Nazis themselves. Possibly Himmler and Pals are also on the track of private dealers. Thieves always fall out, you know. Madame may have loads of loot in her villa, and I am greatly mistaken if the trunk deposited there by Abdul didn't contain more."

"What is the Embassy plane to which you referred recently?"

"A machine kept there, day and night, at the disposal of the German Embassy. I've suspected for some time that it is used for illegal purposes. That's why I engaged Abdul to keep his eyes open for me. But it wasn't used on this occasion, though the plane which brought the trunk seems to have been an official one—and hence diplomatically immune from Customs inspection. However, we may learn something at Madame's villa."

And rather less than two hours later, we presented ourselves at the villa….

"An ambition is realized, Madame Chemberli," said Trevvy, "in this visit."

MADAME Chemberli greeted us with her radiant smile. In spite of her Turkish name, I suspected her to be of German parentage.

"Please come, Major de Treville, as often as you like," she said. "There are some quite pleasant things in my little villa…. But you must not listen to what people say; my possessions are few, just mementoes of my travels."

As we strolled around this charming demesne, "She must have travelled a long way," Trevvy murmured in my ear. "This place is a treasure house."

It was indeed. The garden, also, fully justified its reputation, and the view of the Bosphorus from a marble terrace smothered in roses was unbelievably beautiful.

"I have asked a few friends to cocktails this evening," Madame said. "Of course you will come?" She included both of us in her embracing smile.

I glanced at de Treville. There was a scarcely perceptible pause, then: "On my friend's behalf, dear Madame Chemberli," he said, "I accept gladly. For myself, unfortunately, it is impossible."

To this disposal of my movements I was not in a position to offer any protest, but when we were on our way back, I asked Trevvy: "Might I inquire why I am to go alone to Madame Chemberli's cocktail

party?"

He was staring absently out of a window. "Yes. It is only reasonable…. Please excuse me, my dear fellow, for the liberty. I could think of no other way to do it."

"No other way to do what?"

"To inspect the garage. Our driver tells me there is an abnormally large trunk in there. Then—I should also welcome a glimpse of the Invisible Man."

"The invisible man?"

"The man who was peering at us from behind that antique screen."

I stared blankly. "But how does it help for me to go there tonight?"

"That—I will explain in a moment."

MY VISIT to Madame Chemberli's villa that evening might have been more enjoyable if I had known any of the other guests. Alone among so many enemies (for Germans predominated) I felt at a disadvantage. Madame herself, however, gave me an ardent welcome.

Trevvy had acted as my chauffeur. The sides of his hair, powdered white, accentuated his tan, and driving goggles completed his disguise. Having deposited me at the portico, he drove the car into a courtyard adjoining the garage, where other cars already were parked. His fluent Turkish I knew would pass muster anywhere.

My uncertainty as to his movements did not add to my enjoyment. He had told me to stay for at least an hour, and on no account to leave earlier. It was not the happiest hour of my life. I was constantly listening for some sudden outcry to tell me that de Treville had been detected in whatever investigations engaged his attention.

I WANDERED along the moon-bathed terrace, and glanced at the courtyard where the cars were parked. All the drivers had disappeared. There was not a soul to be seen. I returned and was about to get a drink at the buffet, when de Treville appeared momentarily outside an open window and made a signal.

Madame Chemberli was dancing, and so I had to linger until the music stopped, to make my adieus. When I stepped out again into the portico, Trevvy was waiting beside the car. I got in and we drove off.

"Nervous work," he said, "but I managed it. Madame's hospitality helped. All the drivers were entertained in the butler's quarters. This left the garage empty. The big trunk was locked, unfortunately; but I gave it a thorough examination."

"What did you find?"

"Well, whatever else it contained, it did not hold a treasure of antiquity. It's equipped with a perfect ventilation system! We've blundered onto a really big thing, and I have been doing some hard thinking. One conclusion seems almost unavoidable: The cocktail party was a red herring. Madame Chemberli is trying to throw

somebody off the scent. If my deductions are correct, that somebody is Glückner— Of course I may be wrong. The problem is—what to do next?"…

De Treville, restored to his proper person, had just joined me in our hotel apartment when a visitor was announced—a good-looking Turkish boy of about seventeen, with whom Trevvy was evidently well acquainted.

"Ah, Hamid," he greeted him, "have you found out what I wanted to know?"

"I have found out, Bimbashi. The plane is the private one of Reichsmarshal Goering."

"Good!" Trevvy was triumphant. "I was right! Now I know where we stand, and where Madame Chemberli stands! Yes, Hamid?"

"We are ordered, Abdul the Aged and I, by Madame Chemberli, to be at the villa one hour before sunrise tomorrow. The Reichsmarshal's plane is setting out again."

"Tomorrow! Phew! We must work fast."

Trevvy began to pace up and down the room as Hamid continued: "I have found out from the mechanic that they are going to India—"

"India!"

"Yes, Bimbâshi, to India. I cannot say to what part of India."

"I can guess," Trevvy murmured. "The anti-British area is well known. This is an enormous situation. I must think—I must think." Hamid saluted and took his departure. Trevvy continued to walk up and down.

"Who is that boy?" I asked.

"HAMID?" he spoke absently. "He is the latest edition of Abdul the Aged."

"A great-grandson?"

"No, no. Abdul's son."

"His son! But that's impossible…. How old is Abdul's wife?"

"About twenty-three. She is his seventh. Hamid is the son of his sixth, whom he conveniently divorced to marry the seventh."

Comment failed me. De Treville dropped into an armchair and became lost in a reflective cloud. When he spoke, his words startled me: "The Reich is toppling to pieces, which explains Glückner's behavior. He has been running around in circles, I am told, ever since he arrived from Ankara. He has had the news from Berlin. He also knows the private plane is here, but he doesn't know about the trunk as big as a mosque. Turkish neutrality ties our hands, but we *must* do *something!"* He lay back, smoking and staring up at the ceiling.

"Perhaps, Trevvy," I suggested, "you might care to enlighten me on one small point. What do you believe to have been concealed in this trunk?"

“HERMANN GOERING! He is trying to make a getaway before the crash comes—aided and abetted by his old friend, Madame Chemberli!”

Several hours later I found myself in the private apartment of Frobisher, of the British Consulate. Seated before his telephone, I was suffering from a bad attack of microphone fright: for I had before me on the desk a written piece, by de Treville, which I had undertaken to “speak naturally and clearly” over the wires. Frobisher had just put a call through to the hotel, and I waited while a night porter connected our apartment, where Trevvy stood by. Suddenly, came his voice: “Hullo. De Treville here….”

“Good. Listen, Trevvy.” I fixed my eyes on the script: “Arrangements are complete. It was touch and go, but we have managed it. Two R.A.F. squadrons and one American will spread out to intercept Goering’s plane.”

(Here my copy was marked: *Wait for cue.*)

“Another squadron would have made it more certain,” came Trevvy’s voice. “But we must hope for the best. Whatever happens, they must force him down outside Turkish territory. It’s important that we take him alive.”

This was my cue and I proceeded: “The big trunk in which he came from Berlin will be brought to the airfield at sunrise, as you supposed. I have checked this. As Glückner must know that the plane is here, our chief danger is from the Gestapo.” (*Wait for cue.*)

“I agree,” replied Trevvy. “They dare not unmask him; but unless I overestimate Glückner, I think I can guess what he would do if he found out in time. The unmasking of Goering in Istanbul, on his way to India, would spell disaster for Hitler and Co. It would be nearly as bad as Goering’s capture by the Allies—which we have arranged.”

“Yes, you are right. See you at the airfield.” This was my final speech, and heaving a sigh of relief, I replaced the receiver and turned to Frobisher.

His rugged brows were lowered in a frown. “Of course,” he said, “this is furiously irregular. De Treville’s proper course was to notify the authorities, and—”

“LET our man slip away? No, I don’t agree. The proper course is the one he has adopted. It avoids an international incident and serves the cause of poetic justice.”

“You’re sure the line to your hotel apartment is tapped?”

“Trevvy is certain.”

“Even so—” Frobisher glanced wryly at his watch—“at this hour of the morning, nobody may be listening.”

“Trevvy concedes the Gestapo great efficiency in small details.”

“Let’s hope he’s right.”

By now, an intense excitement had possessed me. The last act of the play was about to begin….

De Treville had secured necessary authority, and in the half-light of dawn we walked across the airfield, to where great activity prevailed around a medium-sized transport. Spears of light pierced the gray horizon, heralding sunrise, and it was possible to make out the plane's swastika markings.

"Everything turns, now, upon the success or failure of your phone message," said Trevvy. "I am almost certain, though, that it was intercepted. I have identified the resident Gestapo man, and I made a point, while this man was in earshot, of telling the night porter that I expected an urgent phone call and should wait up for it. But so far—" he stared around into melting darkness—"our friend Glückner has failed to turn up…. Hullo!"

A CAR had arrived at a side gate, and was approaching the German plane. Trevvy touched my arm and we retired to the shadow of a nearby building. From the front of the car sprang Abdul the Aged. Out of a trailer, attached to it, leapt Hamid. Adjusting a wooden ledge to his back, which Hamid strapped in place, Abdul stood, bent, beside the trailer, as Madame Chemberli stepped out of the car. "Be careful, porter!" she said sharply, in Turkish. "Do not jolt the trunk."

Peering through the gloom, I had my first glimpse of this famous object. It was painted gray, and of a size vastly greater than any I had seen before. Holding my breath, I watched, as Hamid, standing in the trailer, strained and tugged to move the huge thing forward. Abdul grunted instructions, until presently this gigantic piece of baggage rested upon the track strapped to his back. Then, uttering a series of hoggish grunts and watched anxiously by Madame Chemberli, Abdul stood upright under his supernatural load and began to stagger toward the plane.

SO ABSORBED was I in this amazing feat, that I had missed a dramatic development.

Trevvy suddenly grasped my arm. "We win!"

I turned sharply—and saw Madame Chemberli, in the growing light, stand rigidly upright and stare wildly at a group of five men who had materialized out of the morning mist. The leader of the five was Glückner!

He stepped forward and saluted Madame. The conversation which followed was in German: "I regret, Frau Chemberli, that I must interfere with your plans. But I only do my duty…. Camel!" (to Abdul) "Not in that direction! Across to the other runway. To the Embassy plane."

"What is the meaning of this, Herr Glückner?" Madame demanded. "Reichsmarshal Goering will have something to say to you about this

outrage!”

Abdul was already staggering away in the direction of another, more distant, plane, now visible as the mists dissolved.

“This does not concern me, Frau Chemberli. Be good enough to follow the porter.”

“Follow the porter! What do you mean? *I* am not leaving Istanbul.”

“On the contrary, Frau Chemberli, you leave for Berlin at once, *with your trunk.”*

“I refuse, absolutely and finally!”

The four supporting thugs moved forward.

“It is useless,” said Glückner. “The order comes from the Fuehrer in person! Be good enough to follow the porter.”

Madame Chemberli took one swift step—and smote Glückner a resounding slap on the face! “You filthy, crawling spy! This is Himmler’s dirty work!”

“A LADY of considerable spirit,” said Trevvy as we made our way from the airfield. “But her suspicions are unjust to Herr Himmler. It was *my* dirty work! Amusing to reflect that Glückner thinks he has scored a triumph over us!… As for Abdul the Aged, he is not only the strongest porter in Turkey; he is also the only man who has twice carried Hermann Goering on his back!… Even should the Reichsmarshal escape the resentment of a deluded German public, I don’t envy him his reception in Berlin.”

“He will almost certainly be liquidated.”

“It is highly probable. But I was picturing the scene if Frau Goering is there to meet the Embassy plane!”

The Stolen Peach Stone

A beautiful woman, a dead bird, an ancient treasure: What did it all mean?

"HIDDEN treasure," murmured Trevvy, "is Egypt's leading product. To bring new loot to the Nile is taking coals to Newcastle." Yet it was the possibility of recovering such "new loot" stolen by the Nazis from every ravaged country of Europe, which accounted for our journey into the desert that day.

My friend Bernard de Treville—"Trevvy" for short—is the only man I know who can look distinguished in shorts. His monocle, swinging on its cord, was behaving, in the rays of the sinking sun, like a miniature heliograph. He was gazing from the mound on which we stood to where, beyond a little palm grove, the Great Pyramid assumed its sunset blush.

Dusk had begun to draw colored veils over the desert, and we were on the way to our parked jeep when we were alerted by a rifle shot from some point not far from the mound we had just left. Almost immediately, a large black bird flew feebly over the ridge, went into a loop, and fell dead at our feet!

"H'm," muttered Trevvy, raising his monocle. "Has the crow-shooting season opened?"

We stood looking down at the dead bird, which was, in fact, one of the large kites which form a characteristic feature of any Egyptian landscape. "Why should anyone trouble to shoot a kite?" I wondered.

Almost as I spoke, there was a second interruption. Over the crest of the mound a man appeared, running and gesticulating madly. Upon sighting us he ran in our direction.

"Our sportsman in person," said Trevvy.

The man, a lean figure dressed raggedly in ordinary "fellah" fashion, pulled up. He carried an old rifle, and seemed half mad with excitement. "Give me my bird!" he cried shrilly. "What I have shot, belongs."

TREVVY, through raised monocle, surveyed the speaker from head to feet without enthusiasm. "You are uncommonly excited," he remarked, "and uncommonly dirty."

"What I have shot, belongs. Give me my bird."

Trevvy had set his foot on the kite, and the man, a wall-eyed, unsavory looking fellow, focused his one good eye on my friend with an expression of insane fury.

"Civility costs nothing," said Trevvy. "Your manners are deplorable…. Ismak êh?"

The tone of command in which he shot this question ("What is your name?") at the Egyptian, produced a sudden change of behavior: From truculence the man switched in a breath to an equally offensive

servility.

In Arabic too voluble for me to follow, and with much spreading of supplicating palms, he declared that his name was Ali Abd-el Kerim, that he was a very poor man, a dealer in antiques. On the roof of his house (a vague finger indicated Ghizeh) his child, while sleeping, had been attacked by a kite. The baby had suffered serious injury. He had followed the bird, to kill it and to protect other children from its savagery. “Little Fatimah is the pearl of her mother’s heart, effendi,” he moaned. “Alas! Her beauty is destroyed.”

“But why do you want the kite’s body?”

Ali extended lean palms. “To convince my sorowing wife that the black devil is dead.”

Trevvy lifted his foot from the carcass. “Have you a knife?” he asked.

Ali stared hard with his one gleaming eye, hesitated, then produced a serviceable looking knife. “Yes, effendi.”

Then Trevvy said a strange thing. “Open the bird, and see what is in its craw.”

The man perceptibly started—but dropped to his knees after a momentary pause and began to wrench feathers from the kite. Then, as we watched, he went to work with the sharp blade, and in a minute or two had torn out the gizzard of the bird. Thereupon Trevvy said something much more strange: “Hand the craw over to me, and lend me your knife.”

At that, Ali Abd-el Kerim came to his feet as though propelled upward by a spring.

“Effendi!” he screamed. “Listen, please listen to me! My child, the lovely Fatimah, was wearing a scarab hung about her little neck. It was a poor man’s only treasure. This scarab the kite tore away and swallowed.”

“I THOUGHT so,” murmured Trevvy. “And you still hoped to hide it when you found it. I will look. Don’t trouble to argue.”

But the one-eyed Egyptian set up such howls of fury that not until I had poked a revolver barrel against his ribs did he lapse into sullen silence. Presently, from amid a gory mass of odds and ends in the bird’s craw, my friend produced some object which he held up between finger and thumb.

It was a fairly large scarab, dull green of color. “Ah!” screamed Ali. “I am robbed! I am ruined! I am a dead man!”

Trevvy, with obvious reluctance, cleaned the scarab upon a cambric handkerchief. “I don’t claim to be an expert,” he said, “but this looks suspiciously new to me—like one of those the Cairo hawkers try to work off on the unwary…. I may be wrong, though. Some of the real stuff is as brilliant as if it had only just left the workman’s hands.”

"Give me my scarab!" groaned Ali.

"Come to Shepheard's at half past nine tonight and ask for Major de Treville. If your story is true, you've nothing to fear…."

De Treville remained unusually silent during dinner, and it was when we were taking coffee in the lounge that he aroused me from a reverie. "Yes, I agree," he said. "Her hair is dyed. Most artistically, I grant."

"I am glad you—" I paused, staring blankly; for prior to this I had not uttered a word for five minutes! "How on earth—"

"Surely it is simple. The lady at the nearby table is very pretty, and you have been studying her so flatteringly that she has already smiled several times. Her conspicuous titian hair would arrest anyone's attention. But I deduced from your expression that you didn't think it was natural. I said that I agreed."

IN WHATEVER company he finds himself, Trevvy is always the only person present who doesn't know that he is a remarkably handsome man. The lady in question hadn't spared me a single glance. I corrected his impression on this point, but he shook his head. "I'm expecting Sharman of the Police at almost any moment. Otherwise, I'd be glad to ask the fair unknown which of us is right."

This remark led me to bless Sharman; for although de Treville carries off the most amazing social sallies with consummate ease, I have never become entirely accustomed to his graceful impudence. Sharman mercifully appeared a few seconds later and joined us.

"I have consulted Pollock of the Museum," he said, "and he is somewhat reticent. The *cartouche* on the scarab is that of Tehuti-mes III—a popular one with fakers. He says brummagem stuff is in short supply, but that there are some first-class local craftsmen. Troops are ready buyers, apparently."

Sitting down, he placed on the table a small cardboard box which contained the mysterious scarab. De Treville's long, delicate fingers removed the lid, and we all stared at the green object in its nest of cotton wool. "Then it isn't genuine?" I asked.

THE words reminded me of the titian-haired lady, and I glanced across the lounge over Sharman's shoulder. She had gone.

"That's the point," Sharman answered, "on which Pollock remains reticent. He says it's well made; a really efficient fake is indistinguishable from an authentic antique—unless one breaks it. But even if genuine, it isn't a unique or valuable piece."

"More and more bewildering," murmured Trevvy, taking the scarab from the box. "Why should Ali, the one-eyed have gone to such lengths to recover it?"

"Can't imagine." Sharman wrinkled his russet features, this being his manner of smiling. "I should like to get a glimpse of Ali—although

I don't know him by the name he gave. He may be on our books."

"You shall have your glimpse." Trevvy put the scarab in the box and the box in his pocket. "He is due at nine-thirty. You can stand out on my balcony in the dark and feast your eyes on Ali. I need not add that I don't believe his story."

Sharman raised his eyebrows: "Nor do I—except about the kite swallowing the scarab. Probably mistook it for a real beetle. Kites do pilfer valuables now and again. There was a case here not so long back. The Emir of Faluchistan had a family jewel taken from his dressing-room table while the window was open."

"By a kite?"

Sharman shook his head. "So it was supposed. No other explanation. My department was informed by the management but the Emir didn't prove helpful. Said he accepted the loss as an act of God. Beyond adding that the jewel was an heirloom of some sentimental value, he offered no details."

"H'm." De Treville beckoned to a waiter. "We might have one drink here and then adjourn to my room to await Ali."

Just as we reached the elevator it descended, and from it stepped the red-headed beauty wearing a jade-green wrap. De Treville stood aside, bowing ceremoniously. She acknowledged his bow with a slight smile and passed on across the lobby.

As we entered Trevvy's apartment, Sharman asked in a puzzled way, "What is the name of the lady to whom you bowed, downstairs?"

"I have no idea—but I'll be happy to introduce you. Charming, don't you think?"

"Yes. But that's not the point. I'm trying to puzzle out where I've seen her before. She's not a type one readily forgets. Now—where the devil—ah!" He smiled broadly. "Got it! I saw her talking to the Emir shortly after my interview with that gentleman."

"Indeed?" De Treville looked interested. "Is the Emir still in Cairo?"

"No. Left a month ago."

"H'm." Trevvy's expression was speculative, but he changed the subject. "When our wall-eyed friend is announced, Sharman, do you mind standing out there on the balcony, leaving the window ajar? Once you have looked him over, you can proceed to the next window, that of my bedroom, and go in."

Punctually at half-past nine, Ali Abd-el Kerim was announced, and Sharman retired to his observation post. Ali, introduced by a disdainful Arab servant, had evidently had a wash and brush-up. Standing in the doorway, he salaamed profoundly.

"Come in," said de Treville in brusque tones. "Sit down."

Ali seated himself on the extreme edge of a chair. "To hear is to obey, Bimbâshi."

The chair which Trevvy had indicated stood facing the partly open window, and immediately under a lamp. De Treville stared at the visitor for a moment and then stood up. “I have left my pipe in the bedroom,” he said. “Excuse me while I get it.” He went out and into the adjoining room, closing the door behind him.

During his absence, Ali maintained a complete silence. I was glad when Trevvy returned, dropped onto the settee in his gracefully languid way, and opened the conversation with these surprising words: “Since we parted this afternoon, O Ali, I have learned that you are better known by the name of Ali el-Limûma—or, if you prefer it, Ali, the Lemon. Now—”

But Ali had come to his feet as though a scorpion had stung him. “It is a trap! A snare to rob me! I am an honest man, and—”

“Sit down,” said Trevvy quietly. “You see, I know all about it, O Ali. Sit down.”

Slowly, shaking with anger, Ali resumed his seat. “I have committed no offence,” he snarled. “I only want my property.”

“You are known to the Cairo police, O Ali, as an antique faker of some talent. Why you are called Ali, the Lemon I have no idea. But it is an attractive title, which appears more than once in the police records. Now—” from his pocket he took the cardboard box—“I have here the scarab which was found in the craw of the kite—”

“Give it to me!”

“It is not yours. You see, O Ali, I know what is *inside.”*

Ali’s muscular hands grew limp, and lay still upon his knees. “Effendi! You have—”

“I have broken the scarab—yes. This is what I have found in it.” Between finger and thumb, Trevvy held up a small *peach stone!*

ALI, THE LEMON, having performed an action which resembled that of swallowing a mouthful of hot sand, offered the following explanation—as an alternative to making a statement to the police.

He was (he said) a modeler, whose work was highly esteemed throughout Lower Egypt, and in this capacity had been secretly employed by the Emir of Faluchistan to mould a scarab around a peach stone.

For the purpose of carrying out this task, he was confined for some time in the Emir’s suite, and the work was done under the eye of his employer in person.

“I was never alone for one moment,” Ali lamented. “Always he was there, as if he suspected me of plotting some dishonesty….” In fact, it was pathetically clear to the honest artisan that no sane person would go to so much trouble to conceal an ordinary peach stone—obviously, or so he reasoned, with the intention of smuggling it out of Egypt.

The final stage of the proceedings called for exposure of the new

scarab to sunlight for several hours. Accordingly, Ali directed that it be placed on the corner of a dressing table in a window overlooking the hotel gardens, and left there until dusk. He collected the agreed fee and departed.

"Alas!" he concluded, "at some hour just before sunset, a kite, attracted no doubt by the glitter of the enamel, swooped in at the open window and seized the scarab!" Authentic tears streamed down his cheeks.

THERE was a short silence, during which Ali's one eye persistently evaded the steady regard of de Treville's two; then: "Was it a large kite, O Ali?" Trevvy asked.

"Enormous, Bimbâshi."

"How do you know?"

Ali's mouth remained open as though the question had paralyzed his muscles in the act of closing it. "Only a large bird could have done this thing," he said.

"And a very cunning bird. Do you expect me to believe that you have been wandering about Egypt ever since, shooting kites, on the off-chance of finding the right one?"

Ali closed his mouth and swallowed more hot sand! "Effendi—"

"I an aware, O Ali, that you are a clever second-story man—a cat burglar—in your spare time. Don't interrupt me. No open window within jumping distance of a tree is safe from you. No doubt there was such a tree outside the Emir's window. Now—on one condition—only one—I will not press the inquiry: Tell me how the stolen scarab came to be in the craw of the kite."

Ali, the Lemon rose to his feet, raised clenched fists and began to pour out a torrent of Arabic.

"Silence!" snapped de Treville. "One more syllable of that kind and I hand the whole business over to Captain Sharman." Ali sat down, panting. "I have no objection to crows sitting on my grandmother's grave, as you are good enough to wish," continued Trevvy. "Nor am I afraid of my beard growing backward and smothering me. But I insist upon the truth of this matter, or…."

So in a stifled voice, Ali related a strange example of poetic justice.

He was afraid to break the scarab and remove what it contained until any investigation set afoot was likely to have died down. Indeed, lest his ownership should be challenged, he presently decided to enamel it green. It had, originally, been blue. This he did, placing the scarab to dry on the roof of his house in Ghizeh.

SHORTLY before dusk on that unlucky evening, and under the horror-stricken eyes of Ali, a large kite actually swooped on the scarab, swallowed it, and flew away!

The sequel we knew.

But there was a second sequel….

Ali having departed into the Sharia Kamel, we had a parting drink with Sharman and saw him off. Then de Treville said to me, “There remains more to be done. For instance, you are naturally anxious to learn why the Emir of Faluchistan and Ali, the Lemon both should display so keen an interest in a peach stone. I will enlighten you, and —I hope—present you to an attractive lady before the night is much older.”

This statement I found far from stimulating. My curiosity was aroused, but I distrusted the reference to an attractive lady. The methods of my friend de Treville no doubt contributed to one’s success in the days of Anne of Austria, but they are better avoided in the Twentieth Century.

HOWEVER, not without misgivings, I sat down in the lounge while Trevvy brought paper and pencil to the table. He had obtained these from the night porter, with whom I saw him conferring. From the fact that the man glanced at a key rack, I gathered that a resident of the hotel was the subject of their conversation. “Now,” said de Treville, “we have to draw up an advertisement—something like this.” He began to write: “‘Found, in the craw of a kite, a rare scarab, probably valuable, bearing the *cartouche* of Tehuti-mes III. Owner should apply —’ ”

“Oh, I see, you propose to post it to ‘The Egyptian Gazette’?”

“No, no. The porter will dictate it over the phone. Saves time. Now, let me see—how can we improve on this?”

He was still employed on improvements, when I saw the hotel door swing open and caught a glimpse of a jade-green wrap. At which moment, “This should do,” said de Treville. “Come over to the desk and I will read it out to the porter.”

He seized my arm, and a few seconds later was bending over the desk, explaining that, if it were possible, he would like an advertisement to appear in the next issue of the “Gazette.”

“I will ring up the office and see if there is time, sir.”

“Oh, I don’t expect impossibilities,” said Trevvy. “But nevertheless you might as well dictate the paragraph. It is this:” He adjusted his monocle. “Found, in the craw of a kite, a rare scarab, probably of value. The *cartouche* of Tahuti-mes III appears—”

“Your key, Madame?” said the porter to someone who had come up silently behind us, but: “Oh!” came the reply, in a muffled way, and then, “yes, thank you, porter.”

De Treville ceased speaking, dropped his glass on its black cord and turned. I turned also. There stood the red-haired lady, staring at us. Her eyes, a remarkable amber flecked with green, were wide open. De Treville bowed. “Pardon me, I fear I am in your way.”

"Not at all," she said. "I am afraid you will think it is I who intrude; but I could not help overhearing what you were saying. Can it be that the Emir's scarab has been found?"

Trevvy's apparent bewilderment would have deceived Machiavelli. "My dear Madame, had I known to whom it belonged, this ad would be unnecessary. The Emir, you say?"

"The Emir of Faluchistan, sir," said the night porter. "I was about to make the same suggestion myself. I have been told that something was stolen from his apartment here by a kite, but I didn't know it was a scarab."

"Well, well!" exclaimed de Treville, "the laws of the *Arabian Nights* still rule in Cairo apparently. My dear Madame, if you will do me the honor to visit my sitting room, the scarab awaits your inspection…."

On our way up we learned that the lady, Baronne de Plage, widow of a Belgian diplomat, was an old friend of the Emir of Faluchistan, and as Trevvy put the key in his door: "I must prepare you for a surprise, and for a misfortune, Baronne," he said.

Her amber eyes flickered as he spoke, and I thought that she grew a shade pale. "What do you mean?"

"The shot which killed the kite also smashed the scarab—"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!"*

"But you shall see for yourself."

Placing her in a comfortable armchair, Trevvy retired, but returned in a moment carrying the cardboard box. The repressed excitement of our beautiful visitor was unmistakable, as Trevvy shook out fragments into his palm, among them the peach stone.

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed. "It is the Emir's scarab!"

"Here is a piece of the original inscription. It is certainly part of the *cartouche* of Tahuti-mes III. And the color, Baronne?"

"Yes, yes! It is the Emir's scarab!"

"They are more often *blue."*

"Yes, yes. But this one was green."

"Can you account for the presence of a peach stone inside?"

"Not at all. But it may have had some ritual meaning. The Emir was a deep student of such subjects."

Trevvy bowed, smiling. He carefully returned the fragments—and the peach stone—to the box, and handed the box to the Baronne. "A most fortunate act of Kismet—for all of us—since you secure the Emir's treasure, and my friend and I the happiness of meeting you."

The Baronne de Plage was radiant when she left us.

"STRANGE to reflect," mused Trevvy, as he returned from escorting Madame to the elevator, "that our charming visitor is almost certainly a Nazi agent. We must keep the Baronne under observation."

I sat up in my chair with a start. "A Nazi agent?"

“Yes. I have been looking through the catalogue of historic gems looted from Rome—the things I am trying to recover. This is my first big success.” He took something from his waistcoat pocket. “What a graceful liar she is. You see, one peach stone closely resembles another. *This* is the original.”

And he held up a peach stone!

“But—”

“But how simple! It had been split and glued together again. Here is what I found in it. Probably Madame sold it to the Emir, who has a passion for pearls. I wonder how much he paid.” He extended his palm. In it rested a giant black pearl, glittering as if lighted by an inward fire!

“The historic black pearl of the Colonnas, reputed to be the most perfect specimen in the world; looted from Rome,” said Trevvy. “No doubt she is already planning to sell it again. What a disappointment awaits her! The stone I gave her came out of a peach we had for dinner.”

The Secret of the Ruins

A beautiful girl who walked in her sleep… a mysterious hidden treasure: Here was a job for the "Crime Magnet"….

MY FRIEND Bernard de Treville has an incurable habit of veiling big purposes in mystery; so I knew it would be useless to ask him what treasure he expected to find in this little Italian village. He was thoroughly enjoying our roving commission of ferreting out hidden loot stolen by the Nazis from museums all over Europe—and he was also, as usual, enjoying my bewilderment. I was forced to wait patiently while the answer to my question unfolded in one of the strangest adventures of his strange career.

His interest, I knew, centered around the ancient Roman ruins and villa near-by, owned by the eccentric Professor Lambardi, Italy's foremost sculptor and formerly one of the curators of the famous Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Trevvy had left his card at the villa with a request for an interview. In return he had received a courteous note of apology saying that the Professor was indisposed. ("Indisposed to see us," had been Trevvy's comment.)

I knew my friend well enough, however, to know that if he could not accomplish his purpose by a direct method, he would find an indirect one. So I was not surprised when he said to me, after breakfast: "Put on your hat, Digger. We're going on a little reconnoitering expedition."

A SHORT walk brought us to the top of a hill from which we could overlook the southern boundaries of the Villa Lambardi. They were marked by a stone wall of great age, made formidable for would-be intruders by barbed wire strung along its crest. To our right, beyond sloping olive groves, lay the lapis-lazuli Mediterranean. Directly ahead, silhouetted against a blue Italian sky, stood a ruined gate, and beyond it a rank of marble pillars, rose-twined and mystic with old memories.

Suddenly, outlined against the ruins of the ancient portico, appeared the figure of a slender girl. She wore a clinging white dress; her arms were bare, and her hands raised to shade her eyes as she gazed seaward. A moment she stood there, then was gone.

"She seemed to vanish like vapor," I exclaimed. "Do you think we were dreaming?"

"Highly unlikely," said Trevvy, "that we should both dream the same dream." He twisted his monocle reflectively. "Some member of the Professor's household, no doubt…. Although I understood he lives the life of a hermit." He frowned thoughtfully.

On our way back to the inn, he was still lost in thought, and even during lunch he had little to say. Finally he remarked, twining his

wine glass and staring at the dusty road: “I regard it as ominous that this inn bears the arms of that accomplished family of poisoners, the Borgias.”

“Caesar Borgia,” I observed, “once had a villa in the neighborhood.”

“So I gather.” He grew silent again.

Presently the innkeeper came out and stood leaning against the flower-trellised porch, smoking one of the vile cigarettes which he favored.

“Good day to you, *signore,”* he said.

“Good day.”

“You were early afoot?”

“Yes,” said Trevvy. “We walked to Villa Lambardi. I had hoped to see the gardens.”

THE landlord shrugged his heavy shoulders: “The Professor will admit no visitors. They say that since the Nazis lived there, he has become mad.”

“Not improbable,” Trevvy murmured. “They aren’t the guests I’d select for an artist.”

“It is said, also, that his niece has come from Florence to nurse him. He will employ no servants.”

“You mean he has been living there alone?”

“Yes—ever since the Nazis left.”

“H’m. Extraordinary…. Does his niece do the cooking, shopping and so on?”

“Twice a week the *signorina* walks to the town with her basket. No one knows how the Professor lived before she came. You will see her tomorrow—if the *signore* intends to honor my poor roof for still another day.”

“We shall certainly honor your poor roof for still another day,” said de Treville….

I was up betimes on the following morning, but learned that de Treville had already set out. Fairly certain of meeting him if I headed in the direction of the little town, I started off. It was a glorious morning, and as I walked down the steep and winding road, I found it hard to believe that in a world so lovely the acts of men could be so foul; that here vandals had trampled, ravaged and burned so recently that their defiling marks might still be seen upon the countryside.

AS I was about to pass the first shop in the straggling little high street, an unexpected sound pulled me up sharply. A girl was laughing, happily and musically. Upon her merriment followed a few words spoken in a familiar tone; and then: “Really, Major de Treville,” I heard—and the speaker’s English was marked by a delightfully pretty accent—“but you are most absurd.”

A moment later she stepped out into the street, a dusky-eyed Madonna wearing a simple print frock. Trevvy followed, carrying a large basket laden with all sorts of provisions!

"Ah! there you are," he exclaimed when he saw me. "Miss Francesca Lambardi has been initiating me, Digger, into the mysteries of buying things from shopkeepers which apparently they don't want to sell."

As I looked into the girl's laughing eyes, I recaptured momentarily that vision on the hillside: It was Francesca we had seen in the old Roman portico.

Characteristically, Trevvy had established himself on a footing of trusted friendship within the space of half an hour. And so when the girl returned to Villa Lambardi, he and I carried the basket in turn.

AND as we drew nearer to those high stone walls, so did the spirits of Francesca droop. De Treville's absurdly amusing comments never flagged nor failed, nor did the girl's appreciation; but I noted that her eyes ceased to smile in harmony with the laughing lips. A mantle of somber mystery was wrapping her about ever more closely as we drew nearer, step by step, to Villa Lambardi.

At a gate in the ancient wall she paused and turned. "I know my uncle has declined to see you," she said softly, "but I am sure he is wrong—it is best that he should. If his manners seem strange, try not to notice. He has suffered. Perhaps you can help him…."

This gentle prelude did little to prepare us for meeting with Professor Lambardi. In a study laden with books, statuettes and fragments of mural decorations, he sprang up from a chair set behind a vast and littered desk and confronted us. "To whom am I indebted for this intrusion?" he cried.

"To me, Uncle," said Francesca.

"I trust you will pardon me, Miss Lambardi, if I venture to contradict you." De Treville bowed to the girl and then, ceremoniously, to the Professor. "But I am the guilty party."

Francesca stood now beside the Professor, one hand resting protectively on his shoulder. I noted a momentary indecision in his fierce eyes, but all he said was: "Indeed, sir."

"You recently received a note from me," Trevvy went on. He twirled his monocle rapidly around one finger, whereby I knew that he was concentrating on something. "It is not my custom to divulge the exact nature of my business in writing, and I had counted on an opportunity to do so privately. That I now have—thanks to your charming niece."

Francesca lowered her lashes.

"FROM which I gather," said the Professor frigidly, "that you permit few scruples to stand in your way."

“Few indeed. I have a duty to perform. When I have performed it, your opinion of my methods will not matter. That duty, sir, is to warn you that *he* is here—watching Villa Lambardi.”

The effect of these ominous words on the Professor was magical. He took a short step forward, his eyes fixed on Trevvy’s face. Then he spoke—one word: “Stalberg?”

De Treville nodded, set his monocle in place and quietly surveyed Professor Lambardi.

“Stalberg,” he replied.

A moment longer the Professor stood there, glaring. Then he returned to his chair. Francesca looked from Trevvy to myself in obvious bewilderment. Professor Lambardi said, “I presume, Major de Treville, that you carry evidence of your identity?”

“Naturally.” Trevvy stepped forward and laid a passport on the desk.

The Professor glanced at it and returned it. “Pardon me.” His manner had changed. “My niece’s instincts rarely fail. I might have trusted to her discretion. Try to excuse me, Major. I have suffered deeply—and suffering has bred suspicion.”

I have very pleasant recollections of the hour which followed. Trevvy and the Professor became closeted in conference, and I had the privilege of being conducted through the gardens by Francesca. She showed a loving interest in the villa’s beauty and its history.

It had formerly belonged to the Sforza family. “But it is the original villa,” said Francesca—“the villa on whose foundations the Sforzas built, for which I have a special feeling. Fragments still remain. The marble pillars of the portico, for instance.”

We were approaching them as she spoke, and I realized how much more massive they were than they had appeared from a distance.

“DO YOU know who lived in the original villa?” I asked.

She ended abstractly. “Yes. It was the villa of Petronius Arbiter.”

“Nero’s friend, and the author of the ‘Satyricon’?”

“Yes. These is a local tradition according to which part of the ‘Satyricon’ was written here.” Her expression became rapt, mystical, as she gazed along the rose-covered colonnade.

“You are deeply interested in ancient Rome?” I asked.

She seemed to awaken, to drag herself back from some deep reverie. She smiled, and nodded again. “I am quite sure I lived here—hundreds of years ago,” she replied quietly. “Although this is my first visit to Villa Lambardi, there are parts of the gardens which I seem to know intimately—to have known always.”

A bit later, we were joined by Trevvy and the Professor. The latter’s manner had changed; nothing now remained of his earlier truculence. When Francesca returned to the house to prepare refreshments, he

said, looking after the graceful figure: “She is a lovely child. Her visit—which I opposed—has probably saved my reason. Had Francesca lived in Praxiteles’ days, he would have immortalized her beauty.”

“Surely you have not abandoned your own work to stay here permanently?” I asked.

“No. I hope to return to my Florence studio soon. I have been idle too long. Francesca, too, must resume her studies.”

“Is she a sculptress?” Trevvy inquired.

“No—a painter. She shows promise. Although she is happy here, I shall not be sorry to get her away. The place has some peculiar effect upon her.”

“She is probably psychic,” de Treville murmured.

“I fear she is,” Lambardi replied. “Her mother possessed that uncomfortable gift, and, like Francesca, walked in her sleep sometimes. I confess I fear these sleepwalkers. There is something uncanny in such midnight wanderings….”

As we descended the hill from Villa Lambardi, I asked de Treville a question which I had been waiting to ask since our first strange interview with the Professor: “No doubt, as usual, you have your own reasons for reticence, Trevvy; but you had given me no hint that the villa was being watched by someone called Stalberg. Who is Stalberg?”

HIS reply brought me up with a jerk: “I haven’t the faintest idea.” Since I had stopped, he stopped also, and turned, regarding me.

“May I remind you that you said to Professor Lambardi, ‘Stalberg is here’? The information seemed to stun him.”

Trevvy twisted his monocle. “Your memory is at fault. I said, *‘He* is here.’ It was Lambardi who mentioned the name ‘Stalberg.’ ”

“But you repeated it.”

“Naturally. It was plainly the name of someone whom Lambardi feared. He even distrusted me. I had to win his confidence if I were to learn what I wanted to know. You see when I find a distinguished man associated with the fine arts, barricaded in a lonely villa, I know he is hiding from *someone.* I don’t know why or from whom, but I consider it my duty to find out. In the circumstances, I suspect German influence—and I am proved to be right.”

Words completely failed me. I walked on in silence.

“LAMBARDI,” Trevvy continued, “has been through hell at the hands of the Gestapo. He fears them to this day. Their ‘questioning’ (to give it a mild name) has brought him perilously near to the borderline. Even now, the identity of ‘Stalberg’ is a mystery. Lambardi’s mind wanders. But I suspect that Stalberg is some fine-arts expert employed by the Nazis. If he were quartered in Turin, for example, he still might make secret visits, via submarine, to this part of Italy.”

"Employed for what purpose?"

"To trace a missing masterpiece which they believe Lambardi to have in his possession—and which Goering wants."

"And has he such a masterpiece in his possession?"

Trevvy rested his hand on my arm. "He doesn't know," he said in a soft voice. "On this point his memory has failed completely!"

"Good Heavens! The devils!"

"Fiends—I agree…. There is one possible clue—Lambardi's constant reference to Praxiteles. He even mentioned Praxiteles in connection with Francesca."

"I recall it. But how is this a clue?"

Trevvy hesitated. "In some way which I have yet to find out…. But remember—not a word to the Professor."

Trevvy's method of probing the mystery was, to say the least, peculiar. First he wired to Rome for copies of all the paintings or photographs available of Villa Lambardi and its grounds. Then we spent the next three nights prowling secretly about the villa property like burglars.

ON THE third night—there was a full moon—we explored a cavern approached by way of a sunken garden. I asked, "Might I inquire why this couldn't be done during the day? We lunched here this morning, and might have had the assistance of the Professor and his niece in our search."

"You may recall," Trevvy said, "that I warned you not to mention our plans to the Professor. My reason was this: He has assured me that nothing of value is concealed here. Openly, I dare not dispute his word. He sincerely believes his statement is true."

"But you think otherwise?"

"In this case, I agree with the Gestapo."

I stared at him curiously. "Have you any idea what they were looking for?"

"Yes. It can only have been one of two objects. Both are bulky—and both are reported missing. I believe that Lambardi had whatever it is removed from Florence and brought down here, where he successfully concealed it. He was suspected, and the villa was taken over for examination. His stubborn denials—he is no weakling—baffled them. They tortured him—and as a result, his memory really failed."

As Trevvy spoke, some instinct drew my glance in the direction of the marble colonnade. I inhaled deeply, grasping his arm.

A figure, almost spectral but of an elfin loveliness, was floating diaphanously among the rose-twined columns! Filmy draperies blew around her, and it seemed that a perfect work of Praxiteles had come to life before our eyes. From pillar to pillar she glided along the

colonnade, then hesitated, turned, and glided back again. Through the silence of the gardens floated her softly spoken words.

"I must hear what she is saying," Trevvy whispered. "Move quietly."

By this time I had identified the vision. I knew that again we watched Francesca, and that she was asleep. Step by step we crept nearer. She continued to move up and down from pillar to pillar, counting aloud. Each inspection, seemed to leave her dissatisfied, for again and again she returned to count them over once more.

And—a thing which struck an odd chill to my heart—*she counted in Latin!*…

Back at our hotel, de Treville seated himself on the side of his bed and I dropped into a chair. We shared what remained of our last bottle of whisky and sat there, considering the strange incident.

"PROBABLY she knows Latin well," I remarked, breaking a long silence. "Her Catholic training would account for that. But why should she speak it when sleeping?"

"Influence of her environment, I imagine," said Trevvy. "Or it may be a case of hereditary memory. After all—what do we know of the origin or destiny of the human spirit? I have a completely open mind on the subject. Francesca told you that she firmly believed she had a former incarnation in ancient Roman times. Why not?"

"Yes. Perhaps she was a High Priestess. She moved like one, among those ancient ruins. I wonder what intrigues her, at these times of sleepwalking, about the row of pillars?"

"I'd give much to know the answer. We've spent a considerable time here, and it will be merely so many days wasted if it leads to no discovery."

"You're still confident some historic treasure is hidden about the Villa Lambardi?"

He adjusted his eyeglass and glanced at some notes which lay on a bedside table. "Confident is too definite a word. I'd prefer to say I have not lost confidence…."

On the following day a bundle of material arrived from Rome. Trevvy examined the contents piece by piece, then passed each across to me without comment, until he came to a small unmounted photograph, which he examined with a new eagerness.

He looked up with a smile: "This, I think, is the answer to your recent question: 'What intrigues the sleepwalking Francesca about the row of pillars?' Remember?"

I nodded, and took the print. It was a small photograph of a work by the Italian painter, Sinibaldi, and it represented the colonnade at Villa Lambardi. I studied it with care. "It appears to be a good painting. But I fail to see in it any answer to my question."

Trevvy smiled. “Think it over during the day. If no answer occurs to you by the time we revisit the villa tonight, then the fact shall answer for itself.”

“You honestly think you have discovered something?”

“I *have* discovered something.”

WE HAD tea that afternoon with the Professor and his niece. What steps my friend had taken to reassure the old man on the subject of his Gestapo persecutors I don’t know, but there was a marked improvement in his appearance and bearing. He even joined us in a stroll around the gardens, and I stared long and hard at the famous pillars without deriving a hint of inspiration.

As de Treville and I walked down the hill together, he said slyly, “I fear that you dread our parting with Lambardi and the charming Francesca?”

I felt myself flush. “Yes. Francesca is strangely disturbing.”

“I am conscious of this myself. Although so young, her spirit is very old. You will see tonight that she *knows* intuitively things which our more common clay is forced to labor hard to find out….”

That night we had the moon with us again to aid our labors—but no Francesca. De Treville had brought a large knapsack, and this he set down near one end of the colonnade, while I watched foolishly. Next he went from pillar to pillar, as Francesca had done, but where Francesca had counted, de Treville *tapped.* Before the last pillar of the southern end he paused. “Please bring me the tools,” he called. The knapsack contained a number of implements, including a mallet, a chisel, and a saw.

First Trevvy cut away the thorny rose tendrils. Then he broke a hole in the side of what I had thought solid marble! It turned out to be a reproduction in fiber board so perfectly painted as to be indistinguishable from the rest.

“In the picture,” Trevvy pointed out, “you will find that *nine* pillars appear. This one—a tenth—has been added with so true an appreciation of form that not even Herr Stalberg detected it.”

HE WENT to work with the saw, and presently had cut out a section of the painted fiber a foot high and extending half way around the pillar. With my assistance he tore it away, directing the ray of a torch into the opening. “Look!” He spoke in a whisper. “As I expected—and hoped.”

A marble statue was inside.

“What is it, Trevvy?”

“Praxiteles’ masterpiece—his famous Venus! This is what the Professor hid from our Nazi robbers—and then forgot its hiding place.”

Trevvy dusted his hands, smiling in triumph.